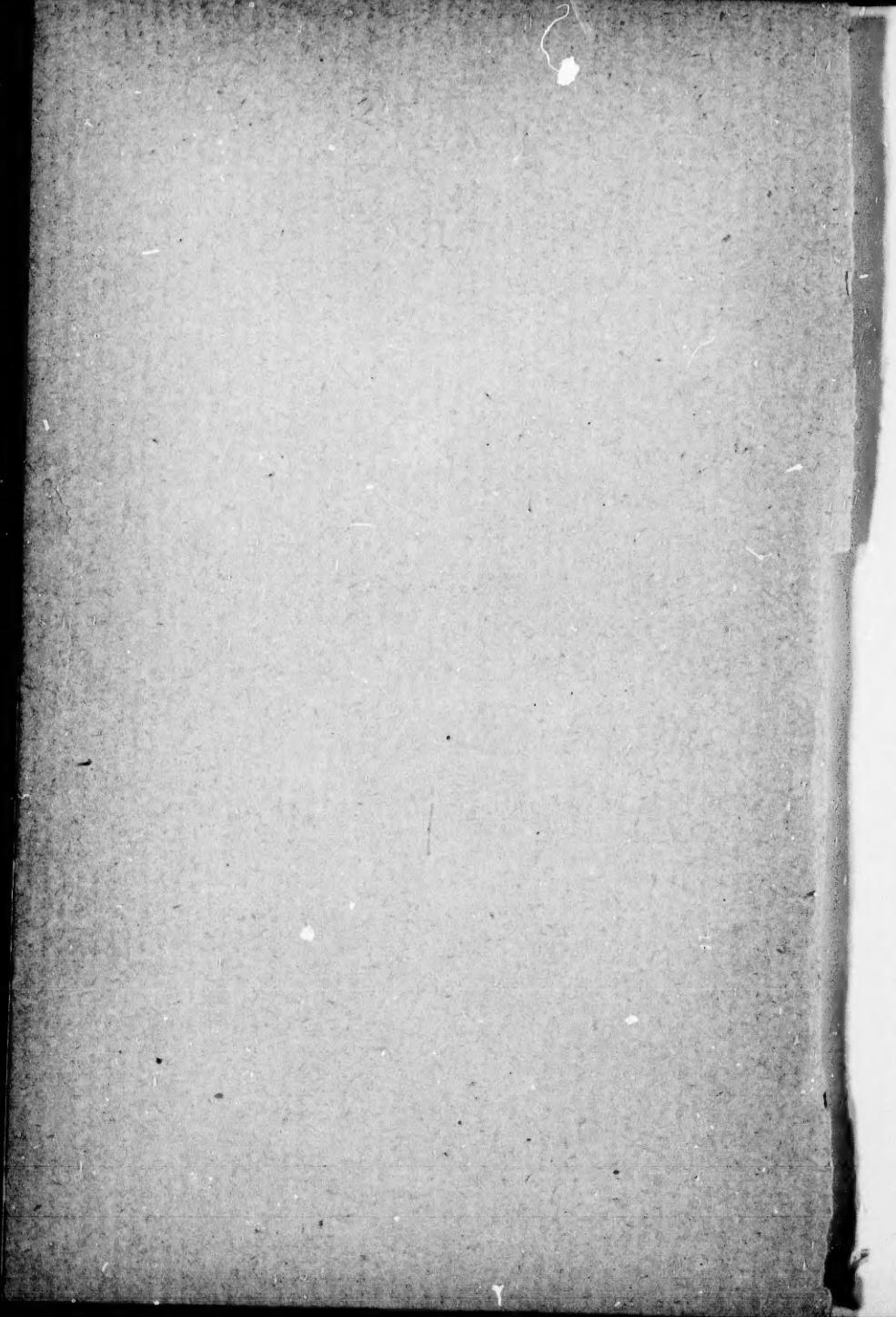
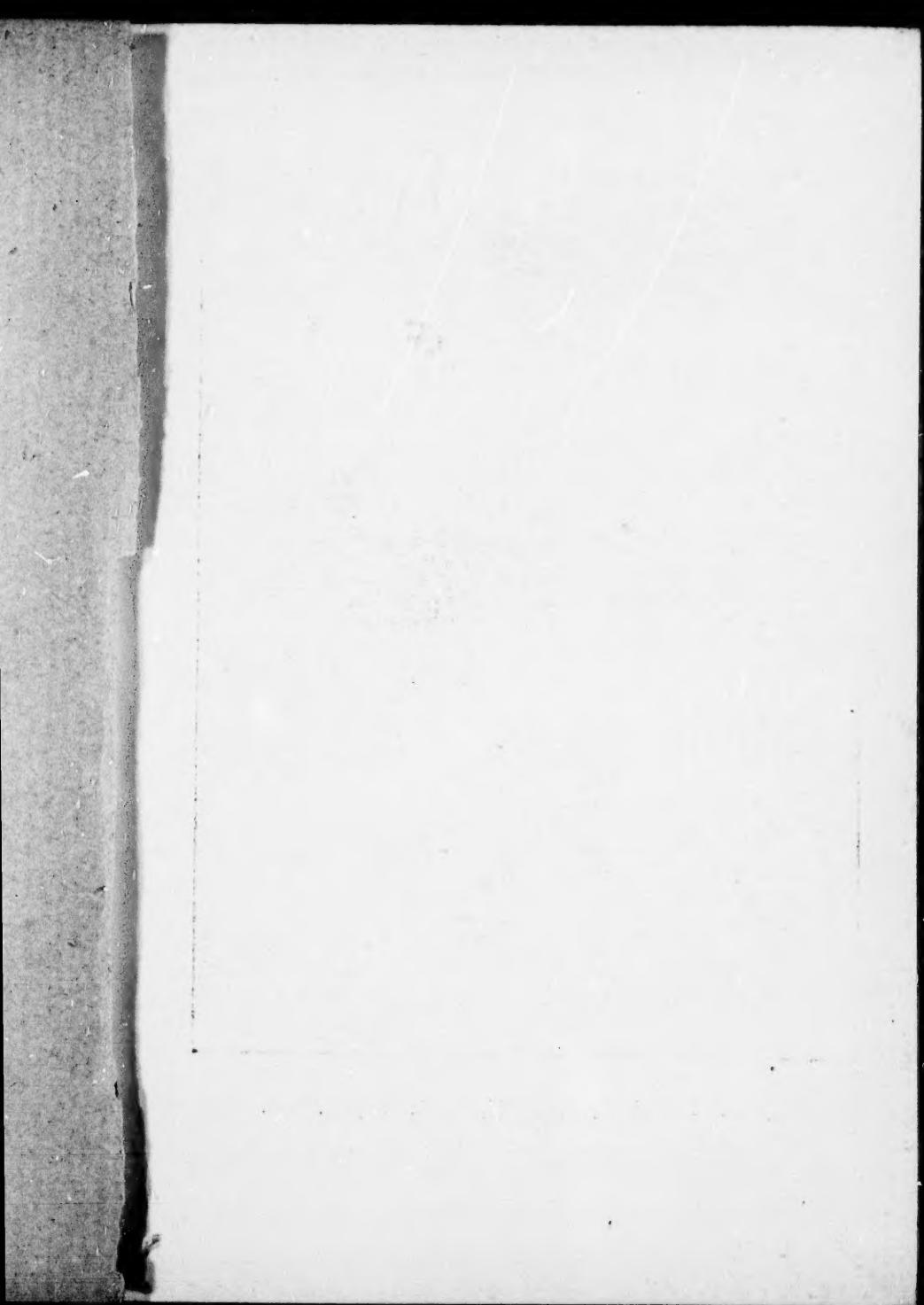
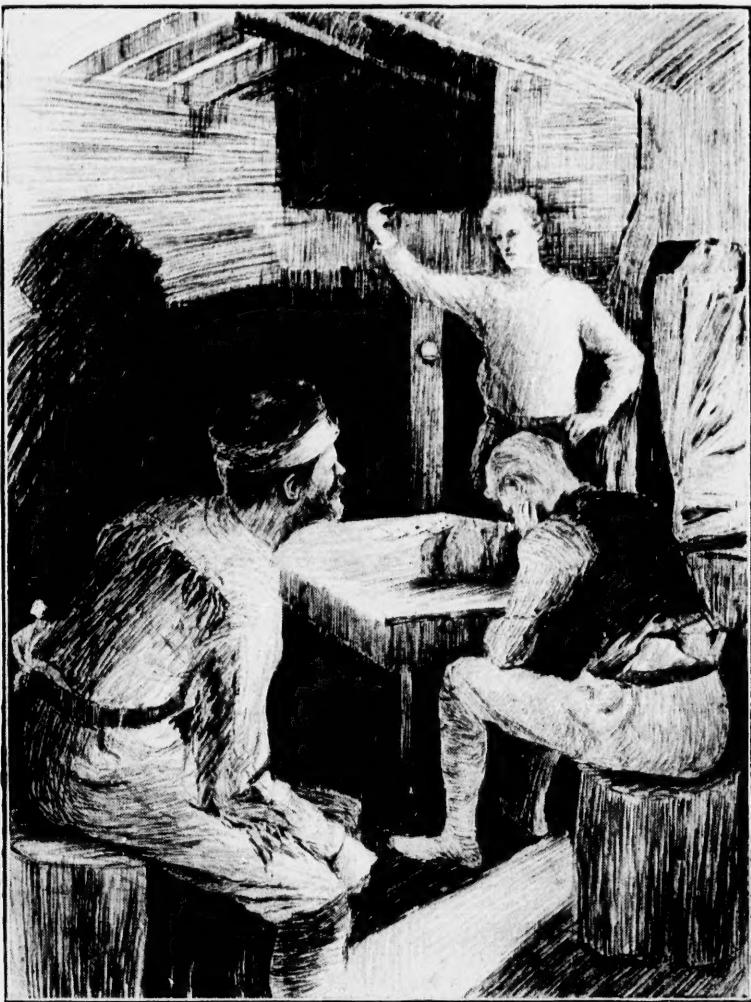


*Car. Porock,
Roger.*

THE ARCTIC NIGHT







"My watch against your gold, Jim Ballantyne!" —p. 2.

THE ARCTIC NIGHT

BY

ROGER POCOCK

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF WESTERN LIFE," "THE
RULES OF THE GAME," ETC.

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THE ARCTIC NIGHT

PROLOGUE

THE STRANGER'S COMING

TOLD BY BILLY

WE must have been playing for nearly fifteen hours when I got up from the table dead broke, with just enough interest left in the world to keep me lounging behind the Tenderfoot, while he staked his last ounce, and lost. Jim Ballantyne, who sat opposite, threw down that greasy remnant our 'deck' of cards, yawned, stretched himself, and was gathering together his bags of dust and nuggets stacked breast-high on the table, when the youngster laid hands on the dice. "Stay, Jim," said he. "What does it matter which of us win or lose? What can anything matter in Scurvy Gulch?"

"That's so," said Jim wearily.

"Then, if you're game for high stakes,
I'll set my nickel watch against your pile,
Jim Ballantyne!"

It was just like the Tenderfoot's cheek, offering to stake his cheap Waterbury against as much gold as a man could carry ; but though we knew his little ways we stared, even the Captain found strength to crawl to the edge of his bunk, while not one of us ventured a remark. We could not see the Tenderfoot's eyes because of the black shadows, but his face was ghastly white, save where the stove cast a brand of red-hot light across his forehead. I remember a sense of awe in the silent cabin while the dice rattled harshly, and the youngster laughed at us in a nasty hollow, despairing way. "Yes, you fellows, my watch, ticking yonder by the bunk, is the only living thing in Scurvy Gulch that feels like home ; but just for fun, Jim, at three throws—that watch against your pile !"

"Well," said Jim, "I dunno as I care ;" then, after a long yawn, "Bring on your watch."

But as the youngster took his time-

piece from its peg on the log-wall, a strange thing happened : he gave a sudden start, which caused the watch to slip from between his fingers, and fall with a clash on the hearth-stone before the fire. Hoping that only the glass was broken, I picked it up, but there was an ominous click of loose wheels—the watch was past mending.

"Boys," I said, laying it on the table before them, "until the sun comes up again next spring we have nothing to measure the time."

The Captain fell back in his bunk, covering his face with the blanket, but neither he, nor Jim, nor I could reproach the boy, because this thing was serious.

At last the old sailor broke the silence. "Forty years come June I have been at sea, thirty-one years I have been a navigator, but I never was lost before. No latitude, no longitude, six months of arctic night, with no medicine to fight the scurvy, no Bible, no 'baccy, no hope, and not a blessed thing to measure the hours !"

Jim Ballantyne left his gold heaped up on the table, and rolled into his bunk ; I

made a noise with the fire, because the Kid might be crying ; but his voice sounded eager, even cheerful, as he asked me to come out with him for a spell.

So, leaving our two partners to sleep, the Kid and I put on our beaver caps and mittens, in addition to which I made him tie a sack about his neck by way of a scarf, before we went out of doors.

This cabin of ours, lost somewhere in the wastes of Arctic America, marked the outlet of Scurvy Gulch. Here, all the summer, we had been digging in an ancient watercourse for gold, slowly, because the hard-frozen gravel would turn our picks like basalt, and had to be thawed out with fires. So rich was the ground at bed-rock, that we had panned out gold enough to make us all prosperous, yet not content worked on until the winter made us prisoners. Now we would have bartered the gold for a bottle of lime-juice, because all our decoctions of willow-bark and twigs had failed to save Pierre du Plessis from death by scurvy ; the Captain was too weak to leave his bunk ; Jim Ballantyne was fighting

gamely against a growing languor ; the Tenderfoot and I were making pitiful pretences to cheat each other into the hope that all was well.

We had plenty of frozen venison and musk-ox beef to last until sunrise, fish we speared by torchlight at our water-hole in the river, driftwood was abundant for the stove ; but we knew that without some acid everything we ate was a slow poison, and the willow twigs had failed.

The cabin was only a roof of driftwood built over one of our pits in the frozen gravel ; but we kept the gables clear of snow so that our windows of oiled skin might serve as a beacon to guide us home when we strayed—indeed, otherwise we might often have passed by the place and been lost, for there was nothing else to mark this mound of snow in the wide waste of the tundras.

I do not know how cold it was, because in a dry climate one feels little difference beyond forty degrees Fahrenheit below zero. Many a starlight night, on the Saskatchewan Plains, I have walked about warm and comfortable while the Government thermometers stood at sixty-five or

more degrees below zero. No wind blows when the mercury is frozen, the air is so still that one can hear a man's voice for two miles, so dry that the electric tension stimulates every nerve, sets the blood racing, and makes one feel strong as a horse. So, as the kid and I walked briskly up and down, we began to forget how miserable we had been in the cabin, and if we had not exhausted every possible topic we should have talked.

The white auroral arches raced up one after another out of the north. That was the usual thing, varied with the courses of the moon or an occasional storm ; but now there were portents in the sky, for the lights were changing to a chill green, then brigades of scarlet lances, serried lines of opalescent spears, army after army of the celestial hosts, charged reeling across the heavens, while at times we felt in the awful silence a low rustling sound like the flutter of the robes of angels. At last the pageant melted away, leaving the clear sky encrusted with millions of stars, like a vast dial upon which the Great Bear was swinging round the Pole—the hour-hand of Time,

"Look, Kid,"—I took hold of his arm, to which he promptly objected,—“while we poor midgets have been fretting over your broken watch, we forgot the clock up yonder, that keeps time for the Universe.”

He chuckled—

“You’re getting maudlin, Billy, old boy.”

“Youngster,” said I, “you’re going to the deuce.”

“What odds?”

“Pretty heavy odds. The memory of a nice girl who is fond of you, against the bad angel who set you to play that game.”

“There’s precious little of angels here—good, bad, or indifferent. They keep away south, where it is warm.”

“Hope, then, playing with Despair for your soul.”

“That’s all rot,” said the Tenderfoot frankly. “There’s nothing hereabouts but cold and scurvy.”

“A month ago that gold meant the winning of the girl yonder at Home.”

“This isn’t a month ago—one would think I was cold enough already, without

being preached at. Some fellow's sure to find us. Bones always looms up to scare people sooner or later—and he'll see a letter I wrote this week—or last—I've lost count. He'll find it between my ribs—that's the Devil's post-box ; and perhaps be good enough to deliver it in some English graveyard."

" You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

" Because I say what you think ? My nose is freezing." He rubbed it with some snow powder until it reddened. " You know jolly well," he went on, " that this scurvy will finish off the last of us before sunrise."

I could not answer that, and yet, looking up at the great Dial in the sky, the finger of the Almighty—

" I say ! "—the boy struck at my ribs like a young battering-ram—" don't go to sleep. You're as solemn as a boiled owl with a frozen ear."

While I chafed out the frost which had suddenly stung my ear like a hot needle, I could not refrain from laughing a little, knowing that the loneliness of the last few minutes must have frightened even the Tenderfoot for once.

"Well?"

"Do you know," he asked, "what made me drop that watch?"

"I saw you start."

"Yes,"—he spoke scornfully,—"you'd have started too if you'd heard what I did—a gun-shot."

What nonsense!—fancy a gun-shot *there!* "No games, Kid. You heard a log in the wall cracked by the frost. I heard it too."

"Hush!" whispered the youngster.
"Listen!"

Then there came up out of the darkness a faint, faint sound, drowned presently by the loud beating of our hearts.

"What is it?"

"Hush!"

A minute later came the sound again, soft as the footfall of some animal. Again it came, but my foot scrunched in the powdery snow, and the Tenderfoot swore. Then I felt a breath of air out of the darkness bearing the steady *whish*-*whish*, *whish*-*whish*, of snow-shoes.

We ran forward, yelling; a loud call answered out of the night; a shadow loomed up against the snow-fields; we

heard a voice speaking—and found ourselves face to face with a man !

There he stood, reeling upon his snow-shoes like a drunkard, and reaching out his hands, as though for help, said, with a feeble chuckle—

“Good-evening, gentlemen !”

Taking off the man’s snow-shoes, I put my arm about him, so as to lead him gently up the rough path from the river ; but the Tenderfoot ran on ahead, aroused Jim Ballantyne, tended the stove, and shook down his blanket in the empty bunk.

Our guest seemed to be light-headed from want of sleep, for presently, when he was warming himself beside the stove, he said such queer things that the Kid could hardly be kept from laughing.

“Gentlemen,” the Stranger began, “my name is Giggleswick—Colonel Hiram W. Giggleswick, at your service.”

With much gravity I introduced the Captain, Jim Ballantyne, and myself, then explained that the youngster was a Tenderfoot—the Honourable Larry Wych-Bradwardine, now busy chopping the meat. “We’re prospectors,” I went on ;

"struck a fairly good placer ; then got snowed up for our pains."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, gentlemen. Wall, I may say that I ain't exactly travelling for my health—started, in fact, from the Arctic coast with a band of Esquimaux, which the — — — Excuse my sarcasms ; they've deserted me. We were hunting for mammoth ivory. Neaouw, you don't happen to have noticed a herd of mammoth meandering around here?"

"I bagged a large buck unicorn last Friday," said the Kid.

"Little boy," answered the Stranger, "when you grow up you may develop the faculty of reason. Until then, ta-ta !"

The Tenderfoot had to be removed.

"As I was saying," quoth the Stranger, "my mammoth have, I presume, gotten by this time into the God-forsaken Hills, where we'll round 'em up next spring. Extinct animal? Wall, neaouw, do you imagine I'd be mosing around here after ghosts? Do you estimate me as a man likely to waste six months of time, worth ten dollars a day, in the pursuit of a dod-gasted hallucination? No, sieree. Hungry?

Wall, now you mention it, I am kinder sharp set. Sort of cramp in my legs, too —which—which—”

His eyes rolled in their sockets, then settled upon me with a glassy stare ; he clutched at the table, missed, and pitched over on the floor in a dead faint. Of course we soon brought him to ; but as to what he was pleased to describe as ‘cramp,’ our worst fears were realized, for under his frozen wet moccasins, and three pairs of frozen wet socks, his feet were like hard white marble. The ‘cramp’ had been the torment of partial thawing, which is like burning with live fire, but fortunately we were experienced in dealing with frost-bite ; so by keeping his feet in iced water for some nine hours, we managed to thaw them, without pain or any injury to the skin.

It was the Tenderfoot who was finally deputed to break the news to our guest that he must lie patiently on his back until further orders.

“Why, bless you, child,” said the Stranger, patting the Kid’s bronzed cheek, “you must go and teach your granny to suck eggs. But I feel real bad to see a

youngster like you with the marks of scurvy. What have you all been taking—willow twigs? Well, follow back along my trail three miles, and you'll find the top twigs of some bushes, with red and yellow leaves, just out of the snow. Yes, it's a cranberry swamp, low bush cranberries, the best anti-scorbutic known. Dig down a foot or two, and you'll find all the berries dead ripe, cured by the frost, hard as bullets; a dish of them berries will set you all to rights. See”—to our delight he produced a silver watch—“take this along to time the distance with.”

“Hold on!” for we were so roused by this sudden glimmer of hope that there was no waiting. “I guess them berries will keep. Hold down your hair, gentlemen, until I get through talking. I surmise that I had the honour to be introduced to the Honourable Which What-d'ye Callum.” He reached to an inner pocket very feebly. “I got this letter, when I was down south in the fall, to Fort Silence, and it's for an Honourable Which Something-or-other—I hope——”

“Hope!” yelled the Tenderfoot.

"Hope!" He seized upon the letter.
"Gummy! Boys, it's from Home!"

Should Colonel Giggleswick ever happen to read this book, I hope he will pardon the liberty which I have taken in presenting the little foibles and tricks of speech which endeared him to us during that long night in Rupert's-land. If we were of some service to him, the obligation is far outweighed by his advice about the cranberries, which undoubtedly saved us all from a horrible death by scurvy. But that is only part of our great debt. Men who are shut up as we were that winter become unhealthy, quarrelling viciously over trifles, lapse into dark moods, ending in hysterical outbreaks, for which it would go hard with one to be held responsible. The Colonel seemed to have the knack of smoothing our ruffled fur; the tact, the cool humour which puts a bad temper to shame.

"Boys," he said once, very soon after his coming, "you've seen considerable of the world." Anybody else would have excepted the Tenderfoot, but the Colonel won the lad's confidence from that moment. "You've all got yarns to tell,

and—well, I'm accounted considerable of a liar myself. Now, why shouldn't we submit to hear one another's stories? Gentlemen, I move that this house be resolved into a committee of the whole. Eh?" There was a general laugh of derision. "Carried unanimously. I propose that the Captain be invited to take the chair. Seconded by Billy. Carried. I now rise to a resolution that the Chairman be empowered to command any member of this committee to report his experiences, on p'r' of bucking three days' firewood. Seconded by Billy. Carried.

"Order! The Chairman is now wishful to begin the exercises."

THE SILVER CHAMBER

TOLD BY THE STRANGER

"MINING?" queried the Stranger,— "mining? Wall, now I claim to be posted on mining. Didn't I take a hold of the 'Let Her Go Gallagher' silver mine when the stock was down at nothing with the bottom knocked out, and make that same property hum? Never heard of the claim? Why, Gallagher stock has been flummoxing round on London 'Change since 1880. A pretty straight silver proposition was the Let Her Go Gallagher. An American miner would have stocked her at a hundred thousand dollars, and made dividends. But,—pshaw!—what can you expect from a gang of Britishers! A company-promoter picked her up cheap from the assigns of a busted Jew, got up a syndicate, with Lord John Guineapig for President, and, times being so-so,

palmed off a million dollars' worth of stock on the Mugginses. Then he invested the plunder in his wife's name, went smash, and got whitewashed in Bankruptcy.

"So there was the Let Her Go Gallagher, like a white elephant, on the hands of Lord Guineapig and his Mugginses. What was they going to do—work the mine? Well, you see Lord Guineapig's younger brother was a mining expert, and the Mugginses—mostly preachers and widows—were proud to be humbugged by a Lord, so the end of it was that the Directors levied an assessment, and started to work developing.

"Now, as I said, an American mining-man with one hundred thousand dollars would have made the mine pay; but it needs thundering big profits to distribute a dividend on a million dollars. These Tenderfeet began operations by renting a big place in the City; built a quarter-million-dollar granite building for offices in Denver, Colorado; put up the wrong kind of mill, the wrong kind of smelter, and the wrong kind of works; then, to show how much they didn't know, gave the management to the Honourable

Augustus Guineapig. At the City offices there were clerks and flunkeys ; at the Denver office, managers, clerks, typewriters, and flunkeys ; at the mine assayers, experts, managers, clerks, typewriters, and flunkeys. Moreover, they all had their horses, their dogs, their guns, their eye-glasses, and their horse-cloth overcoats. Every time the assayer sent home a button of silver there was a champagne luncheon for the Directors ; every manager's report went as a puff to the newspapers, and the official photographer used to send large groups of the staff in their working clothes.

"On 'Change the stock wobbled up and wobbled down with every letter from Colorado—why even the head of an elk sent home by the Honourable Augustus sent it up three points ; but at last all the capital was spent, no ore was in sight worth a cuss, and the shares were hard to sell in the City at three for a shilling. That's when I met Lord John Guineapig in Denver—blue as vitriol—for he'd got to report to his shareholders that they'd been sold again, poor suckers, and must make an assignment.

"Look-a-here," says I, "have you any particular hankering after Liquidation?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Well, sir, seems to me that now you're in a nasty hole it'd be superfluous to wallow around in it. S'pose I take a hold of your mine and make it pay, what'll you do for me in the way of shares?"

"Oh, I'll leave you our assayer, Mr. Gneissmann, Mr. Smiff our accountant, the Honourable Augus——"

"Take 'm away and bury 'em," says I, "them, their lordships, their horses, their dawgs, their guns, their blawsted eyeglasses, and their horse-cloth ulsters. I want your dead mine, but I ain't having no truck with the long procession of mourners. I want five thousand down, absolute power, and a third of the profits."

"That's how I became the manager of the Let Her Go Gallagher Mine.

"Takes a well-educated liar to manage a mine. Most bosses when they get into a pay-streak cable home 'Great Bonanza —immense returns coming!' Of course, the stock goes up flying. Then when the

engines bust, or a few men get smashed, they wire 'Dreadful catastrophe !' so that the shares go down, down, down, till the bottom drops out. Now when I struck it rich, I kept my mouth shut till I'd filled up the safe against a rainy day, then I'd be able to have all sorts of smash-ups without their being any the wiser in the London Market. Not that I did have much trouble beyond an occasional shooting scrap on a pay-day. Fact is, my life was straight bliss save for one thing—and that was a Britisher. It was Smiff, Lord Guineapig's old accountant, who knew no more of mining than a Friburg expert ; but the creature, having lots of wealth, had bought the mine next to ours, the Gallagher's Daddy. Now I ain't prejudiced to speak of, but I never had any use for an English la-di-da son of a lord in checked pants and gaiters. It hated me, too, worse than pizen—blast its cheek ! Not that I wasted my business hours hating, for I just kept my head shut unless I could give a chance smack in the eye to the Gallagher's Daddy. Well, one night who should come into my office but a young woman. Pretty as

a picture she was, all wet and shivering, but her mouth was—gummy. Cry? Cried fit to break her little heart. Mr. Smiff, she said, was a beast—a horrid little beast. Yes, that's what she said. Smiff had sent for her all the way from England as his clerk and typewriter, then when she showed up at the mine, coolly informed her that he had since written countermanding the order—wouldn't take her in out of the rain! Mad? I'd have killed the Thing, but that being mid-summer game was plumb out of season.

"Pretty? A perfect little witch of a woman—black hair, black eyes that snapped, and a thin, oval, winsome sort of face that bowled me right out. She had the cunningest, cutest little ways you ever seen, and a real lady every inch. I took her right on my books as secretary, walked her over to the landlady at our boarding shack, and had a cabin fixed up regardless. Oh, but she was a ripping clerk, smart as a stock-broker, always busy, eager to learn, sharp as a steel-trap with the books. -She'd take down my letters in shorthand, whisk them off on a typewriter, keep the letter-book indexed

up to the minute, run the postage stamps—why I got so used to her in a week that I barely took the trouble to sign what she wrote, much less see if it was correct. Fact is, I gave over my heart, the keys of the safe, and the books; she ran me, she ran the office, and if she liked she was free to run the mine. How she did hate the Thing—that horrid, nasty Smiff!

“ Bit by bit she put me up to the Scheme—little by little she led me on—I just burning to get quits with the Thing, if only for her sake. At last she showed me how I could fairly knock the stuffing out of the Gallagher’s Daddy. You see he’d struck it rich—lit on to a bonanza that was the talk of Colorado, the Silver Chamber they called it—a mass of sulphurets and ruby silver big as a church, running two thousand dollars a ton. It was right at my end of the ledge, within a few feet of the end of my third level drift, which had been rich to the very edge of my ‘claim.’ ‘Grab on to it,’ said the sly little puss. ‘Trouble? Never fear. If you’ve got the pluck,’ says she, ‘I’ll supply the brains. Now,’ says she, ‘I’ll go around and begin by squaring

Smiff's engineer—get around him in a jiffy—and we'll take such a rise out of old Smiff that he'll think he's sat down on dynamite.'

"Of course she twisted me round her little finger before I'd time to think—don't suppose I'd have run full tilt at a whole code of laws in my natural senses. We bribed Smiff's engineer, who disabled his hoisting gear in such a way that the mine had to be closed down while he sent away to Denver for skilled hands. While Smiff's men were laying around we bought them up till there weren't six left on his pay-roll, while I was making double shifts on the third east drift. Now both mines were worked with shafts because there was no slope around worth tunneling from; moreover, they were both wet as Niagara; so you see the pumps were about the heaviest part of the machinery. At that little cat's instigation I took some carpenters by night to the Daddy's shaft. Lowering men with ropes we got three solid brackets fixed to the timbering, say forty feet down. Then we lowered a tank of well-tarred lumber, which fitted

neatly on the brackets, and filled up the shaft. Finally we put in three feet of water and stole away. Next morning the Thing came sauntering down to the works, and when it looked down the shaft there was the black water within a few feet of the top. 'Bai Jaove—what a beastly shame !' it wailed, 'the mine's all full of water ! Oh dear ! Come, you men —you beastly engineer fellah—wig up the pump !'

"But the beastly engineer fellah couldn't wig up the pump because the said pump was busted. Work ? How we worked ! Double shifts—double time —Sundays—holidays, hoisting out the bonanza sulphurets of the Gallagher's Daddy. The Silver Chamber—why the name's pigwash to the reality. I never in all my mining experience saw such a haul. Think that Smiff fretted ? Think he found out and had deputy-sheriffs around my ears ? Not a bit of it ; the Critter went off fishing—yes, sir, fishing, and was the laughing-stock of Colorado while I hustled.

"Ye gods, I was the blindest ass ever born. Never found it out till I'd worked

the Silver Chamber down to the last ton—never till the last ounce was consigned to the Smelting Company down in Denver. I was down there for a holiday, when I met the manager of the Great Dinde Smelting Syndicate, and he greeted me with a regular horse-laugh—

“‘Well, Mr. Philanthropist,’ says he, ‘how goes it?’

“‘Philanthropist! What do you mean?’

“‘Why, ain’t you been working double shifts for the last three months, and consigning every blessed dollar of your bullion to the credit of the Gallagher’s Daddy?’

“‘You’re fooling!’ says I.

“‘Well, I’ve been thinking it was you who’d gone locoed—unless you’ve mortgaged body and soul to Mr. Smiff.’

“A light broke in on me. ‘Let’s see the books,’ I howled, ‘and my letters.’

“Yes, it was the cold paralyzed truth. I’d been victimized—horribly victimized, by that little she-cat. While I signed letters without glancing at them, she’d written strict orders, from me, that all bullion was to be credited to Smiff of the Gallagher’s Daddy.

"While he was away fishing, with scarcely six men to go on his pay-roll, I'd been working his mine at the expense of my company, and handing over the whole proceeds to his bankers. It was a horrible put-up job. That she-fiend of a secretary had been sent down by the Critter in revenge. She was his wife, newly out from England—Mrs. Smiff of the Gallagher's Daddy Mine.

"Can you ask? Can you torture the heart-strings of a ruined man? I skipped the country that night, and the Let Her Go Gallagher Silver-mining Syndicate Limited is a busted community."

THE LITTLE FUR SEAL

CONTRIBUTED BY THE CAPTAIN

Being the translation by Ivan Gregorovitch at Avatcha Bay, of an old letter discovered with many others in the wreck of the *St. Peter and St. Paul*. This vessel, cast away about the year 1807, was found and searched in 1856 by Captain Kendrick of the brigantine *Dolly*, on his touching at one of the Aleutian Islands for water.

*St. Petr, Kadiak Island, Alaska,
July 10, 1806.*

To His Excellency Colonel Alexes Tschirikoff, Governor of Eastern Siberia, Irkutsk.

VENERABLE BROTHER,—In the name of the saints, send me some brandy. I languish on salmon and Indians, inhaling the latter, for, so far, I have been mercifully delivered from the necessity of eating any. They are more suffocating than our own dear Russians. I pray you salute

the Immaculate Ruin, our aunt, or kiss her for me when you can spare time. Thus I shall have done my duty, and yet not suffered.

Oh for the delights of Her Excellency's ball-room and a clean shirt!

How I envy you the very least of the perquisites and assumptions of money that flow into your treasury, pickings worthy of a Minister of State. But at least I am solvent, for so long as I can blow my own trumpet I shall never be destitute, having Her Excellency, yourself, and the Immaculate Ruin to borrow from, and, in default of roubles, I can repay, as you perceive, in compliments.

Baronoff, as you know, spent last summer in extending the Company's operations to a point a thousand miles or so from here, and about three hundred miles eastward of Mount St. Elias. I was with him in the *St. Paul*, my present command, and he had all the natives that could be mustered, in some three hundred skin canoes. Most of them, by the way, were drowned in Icy Bay. We founded a post in the country of the Sitka tribes, and called it Neffski Arkangelsk. On

our return westward we left behind some twenty-three men as garrison, but they have foolishly allowed themselves to be done to death somehow ; so we sail in a few days to massacre the Indians, about the only amusement there is to look forward to at present.

Meanwhile I have put in for repairs at St. Petr ; and, beyond some little diversion, of which it is the purport of this writing to inform you, I have little to do except play cards with the priest, and listen to the oddest lot of legends that ever came out of a monastery. I don't suppose that you care to hear about the condition of the country and the fur trade, or I would regale you with an account of all the hunters drowned, stabbed, or starved since I last wrote. Nay, I will not weary you with such commonplace matters, for it is enough that men like ourselves, of the first fashion, are condemned to be bored all day with the affairs of the *canaille*, without letting them intrude upon our private correspondence. Verily our reverend grandparent deserved to be exterminated and heavily fined for his idiotcy in discovering such a country.

As a matter of fact, however, I am not writing to amuse either myself or you, but to tell you how I managed to quarrel with Baronoff. As the insolent old fool has written to Golovnin and others to have me sent home in disgrace, I want you to have his paws burnt. How such a base-born, red-haired, shop-keeping, bald-headed, shrivelled-up he-beat came to be Governor of Russian America I cannot imagine.

Early in June I arrived at Ounalashka, in the Aleutian Islands, with supplies from Petropavlovsk; found the Governor there, and began to unload. From the first I heard little else but the charms of Olga—the Little Fur Seal, they called her—daughter of a big Aleut chief from Oumnack. I entertained this old gentleman on board the *St. Paul*, until he grew mellow with my own particular whisky. Olga sat in one corner with her big dark eyes fixed on me, her red lips just a little parted, and her black hair streaming down her back: only a savage, but not among all the Court ladies in Petersburg could there be found any to surpass her in beauty. When I thought the chief was

in a sufficiently good humour, I asked him how many skins he required for his daughter ; to which he replied that all my skins wouldn't buy her, for Baronoff wanted a wife. Now the Governor has more skins than I have hairs ; but I have wisdom, and wisdom is better than many skins ; so I told him that if he would give me Olga I would tell him all about everything. You know I picked up ventriloquism at college, so that when the old man began to deride me, voices were heard laughing at him from under his chair, out of the whisky-bottles, in the beams overhead, and all over the cabin. He said I was a great doctor, and knew everything ; but how could he give me Olga, when he had already promised her to Ivan, a young chief in the village ? Moreover, she was in love with a fourth party. I told him that I was very wise, and that I loved Olga.

To make a long story short, I disposed of the fourth party by giving him an old cocked hat and a sword, along with the Degree of Sublime Exaltation in the Ancient and Mystical Order of Hereditary Gluttons. The initiation was a most

imposing ceremony. I read the ritual from a big medicine-book, and in token of the ancient hide-bound traditions of the Order, encased his head in plaster of Paris, and painted his nose red. After marching thrice round the cabin on all-fours, we concluded the ceremony with an oath, wherein he was bound to present himself in person at Irkutsk, and there to deliver letters-credential to His Excellency the Venerable and Supreme Grand Master of the Order, who would take him into his arms, rub noses in token of amity and joyfulness, and appoint him Minister of Stolen Goods in the Government of the province. He sailed in the ship of my little Dutch friend, Hans Schlitz, and I hereby commend him to your most brotherly care. As to Ivan, the third party, I sent him to Baronoff in the dead of night to ask why he had red hair ; but instead of having his mind enriched with the important revelations which were to have been uttered by the Governor on hearing this mystical password, my poor friend had his body decorated with quite another kind of enrichment, and was found next morning on the top of an

inaccessible rock, with one eye and three fingers missing, and his nose knocked out of all recognition. Baronoff is inclined to be a little playful at times !

The fourth party being placed under your Excellency's care, and the third party having been ignominiously rejected as damaged goods by the Little One, I had now to compensate her father for the loss of Baronoff's skins. Wherefore, I proceeded to instil the most subtle wisdom into the head of my future father-in-law. I taught him a little sleight of hand and some tricks at cards, showed him how to run a sword through his body by wearing a hollow belt of tin, invented for him a beautiful system of fortune-telling, and gave him my speaking-trumpet, with which to bellow at the people through his big medicine-mask. I showed him the persuasive effects of phosphorus on the face at night, and how white people would turn black if they painted themselves with nitrate of silver. But the most polite of all the accomplishments I instilled into him was ventriloquism—a trick which he has now raised to the dignity of a fine art. Suffice it to say that I qualified that

man to become such an intolerable nuisance that he is to-day the recognized terror of all Alaska, and possesses, as an indirect result, more skins than even Baronoff could have offered for his daughter.

But, alas for all my virtue and discretion ! Just as I had won the Little Fur Seal, for whose sake Baronoff was piling up his skins in vain, the young Aleut chief slowly undergoing repairs, and the fourth party proceeding on his way to rub noses with your Excellency at Irkutsk, the old chief came to me, crouched down on the floor of the cabin, and began to wail.

I took him by the neck, rattled him, and ordered him to speak.

“ She’s gone ! ” he moaned—“ gone away in the night ; left her poor old father all alone ! ”

In response, I shook five teeth down his throat, hauled him on deck by the nose, kicked him overboard, and went to Baronoff. Our sorrows had made us brethren, and we wept. We were sipping a small keg of brandy, to assuage our anguish, when in came Ivan, with his nose bandaged up, to mourn with us.

We gave him some of the brandy, in proof of our sympathy, and as we sat together, mingling tears with our spirits, a little boy entered and laughed at us. He said Olga was his sister, and had whispered to him last night, before she went away, that *any one who wanted Fur Seal would have to hunt.* She said also that she was going to St. Petr, on Kadiak Island, but bade him tell no one of the fact, particularly Captain Tschirikoff.

Baronoff rose from his chair with a most absurd assumption of dignity, and said :—

“Captain Tschirikoff, you will at once beach the *St. Paul* for repairs in the east cove, and superintend the work in person. Ivan, you will report to me at nine o’clock this evening, and receive dispatches for Attoo Island. Boy, consider yourself entered on the books of the company as my body-servant, and be ready by to-morrow morning to go with me to Kadiak Island.”

Dismissing Ivan and the boy, I told Baronoff that I intended to beach my ship for repairs, not here, but at St. Petr, where there were greater facilities. He

at once ordered me under arrest. I replied that I was not accustomed to indignities at the hands of a tradesman ; that as a naval officer I was responsible to no civilian, and only refrained from challenging him because he was not a gentleman. Leaving him speechless with rage, I boarded my vessel, slipped and buoyed my cable, and squared away for Kadiak Island.

A Russian does not sleep when he is out wife-hunting, and you have only to hold in remembrance the black eyes of my Little Fur Seal to realize that I was not many days in reaching her hiding-place. I landed at St. Petr with my whole larboard watch, and proceeded to search the village. Just as one of my men entered a house he called to me, but I reached the front door only in time to see a skirt flutter out at the back. Giving chase, I had the Little Fur Seal safe in my arms within a hundred yards of the house. We have hunted bears together, oh ! my brother, and faced them when they were defending their cubs ; but a she-bear in the spring is a lamb compared to Olga. She scratched, bit, kicked,

screamed ; she tried to plunge a long knife into me, and when I took that from her, clutched at my hair. Wherefore, I beseech you to send for a wig to Petersburg—just a little wig, with a becoming queue, in the latest make, in size about the same as your own. Have this consigned to me, care of Captain Schlitz, at Petropavlovsk.

When I got her down to the boat the Little One began to sulk ; and, except for some scratching and struggling as we were getting her over the ship's side, she sulked on consistently till supper-time. I felt like a brute as, after a solitary meal in the cabin, I smoked a pipe before turning in. I was conscious all the time of the glare of her black eyes. Whenever I tried to make friends, they flashed upon me like twin stars ; while once in my bunk, I had an uncomfortable presentiment that, finding me asleep presently, she would cut me off in the flower of my youth with a big butcher's knife. But reflecting that it is much wiser to sleep than to remain awake imagining vain things, and greatly solaced by the memory

of having seen old Baronoff's vessel beating her way up the harbour, I partly closed my eyes and dozed a little.

As luck would have it, I was just sufficiently awake to note that the Little One, believing me to be asleep, was stirring. I snored comfortably, and, unsuspected by her, watched every movement. Silently she rose to her feet. How pretty she looked as she stood in the faint glow of the candle-light, and then moved slowly towards me almost imperceptibly, and as softly as a panther ! Picture to yourself, Alexes, the gentle swaying of her limbs, the tangled mass of shadowy hair, the brilliant eyes, the full red lips. Outside I could hear Baronoff's crew taking in sail and letting go the anchor. I thought also, with a strange sense of pleasure, of Ivan stealing slowly along the coast in his canoe towards us. Then, Alexes, conceive my delight as I saw her creep past the chest upon which lay the knife without even stretching out her hand toward it. A moment later I felt that she was bending over me ; her breath played upon my face, her lips drew closer and closer,

until at last they rested upon my cheek,
leaving there the imprint of the sweetest,
small, round kiss that ever sent a thrill of
joy to the heart of man.

The Little Fur Seal was mine!

Your affectionate brother,

NICHOLAI.

THE ARREST OF DEERFOOT

TOLD BY BILLY

I'M only a Blackfoot squaw, Major, and you're a chief of the Mounted Police; but the little voice of Truth lives in my mouth and it shall be heard. I alone know the story; so what's the good of your trial unless I talk? And don't let me catch this new interpreter telling lies out of my mouth.

Major, your prisoner there is as innocent as a prairie-dog. Be still, Beef Hardy; I will be heard, in spite of you! Look at him, Major; big Beef Hardy, your Mounted Police scout and interpreter—the handsomest white man on the Plains—he swears to you that he killed Dried Meat, my husband. I tell you that he lies! I say, in the presence of the Big Spirit, I, and I alone, killed Dried Meat! Come, I am yours: take

me—kill me ! I deserve to die ; but that man shall go free !

Dried Meat bought me for his wife last year. My father told me that he was very wise, waited for in council, the best scholar at the Agency—yes, like a paper book full of black marks. I can't read : and, oh, how I hated him !

He sat in the lodge all day and gave orders : his very presence more than I could bear ; his voice rasping my ears like a file ; and his sneer made me want his blood. Not for days and weeks, but for years, he was to be my master ; not wearing off like a sickness, or killing me like the plague, but always there in the tent, making my little life as bitter as frozen berries, till my hour of death. He'd no more soul than a stretched skin ; no tears, no laughter. He would not love me, nor could I fight with him. He didn't care for me so much as the dogs he beat, the colts he broke, the stones he threw at the crows. Can a woman bear that ? Oh, I would rather have been chained to the dead !—I—I, who loved—another man !

He had one virtue : he could run. No

pony could beat him in a fair race. They called him Deerfoot, after our great Indian runner. He used to keep a paper in the tepee—a printed paper, many moons old—to say that Deerfoot was to race with a white man in the Calgary Rink. He was proud of being called after him, especially as both had Dried Meat for their birth-name; and—set my words down on a white skin with ink—*they were sometimes mistaken for one another.* My master had been taken for the great hero: for him who, on the Iron Trail, stood off three Mounted Policemen with an axe; for him whose hands are red, so that the Government offers great money for his body; for him who stands alone in all the world and defies the white man's might!

I was travelling last week with Dried Meat. We were taking a band of colts from our Blackfoot Agency to the Blood Reserve. You know Willow Creek, Major—the little coulee where Wade-the-Coward keeps a trading store. It was there we camped on the flat by the Creek where the wind had whisked away the snow and left grass for pasture. There

was nothing to eat all night ; there'd been nothing to eat all day, and we were hungry. Perhaps our hearts had grown evil for the want of food. I had a little dog, Major—just a wee scrap of a thing that whisked about the camp and loved me. That day a horse had kicked him and he was lame. Poor little trembling, crying thing ! gazing into my face, licking my cheek, trying to bear the pain. Dried Meat found me in the tent ; and in his cold, calm, scornful way said : "Here, squaw, cook that little brute for my supper : don't you see I'm famishing ?"

My tongue was stiff with anger. I could not speak ; I had not time to carry my pet away. His knife struck straight into its throbbing heart ; its life-blood fouled my dress ; and before I could get at Dried Meat's throat, I was alone. It lay in my arms dead—the one creature I cared for in the world ; and there in the dusk I swore by the Big Ghost above : Blow for blow—blood for blood—life for life !

A minute before I'd seen from Wade's corral a horse tied to the door of the trading house. I had noticed the brand,

the clipped tail, the big saddle : it was a horse of the Mounted Police. The owner of that animal must know of the search for Deerfoot, and of the great money offered for his capture. My master had sometimes been mistaken for the Black-foot hero. I took his running shoes and wrapped them in the old printed paper which is all about Deerfoot. What if I took them so wrapped and sold them to Wade for food—would not the soldier see ? Suppose my master resisted arrest and were shot !

I stole out of the tepee and found that Dried Meat was away among the horses. I crept to Wade's door unseen, knocked, was let in. Major, the owner of the horse was not the red-coat I expected ; he was not one of the Police, but big Beef Hardy, the interpreter—your prisoner !

I tried to run away, but Wade held me. I screamed and struggled to escape. Major, I wanted to be saved from my master, but not by this man—not by Beef Hardy. Do you think I'd give him the chance? No ; I—I hate him! I hate him to the death, because—I hate him! Why do I? What's that got to do with

it, Major? If you don't like my witness talk, say so, and I'll go.

I wouldn't speak: they couldn't make me speak. Beef asked me why I had Deerfoot's shoes; how I got Deerfoot's paper; if I was Deerfoot's wife? "No," I told him, "I'm not his wife. My man is Dried Meat," I said; "a young Piegan brave, camped on the flat by the corral."

Hardy looked into my eyes. He knows me; he believes all my words, and let me go like a man. Then I saw Wade-the-Coward sneer at him for being taken in; and I heard Wade-the-Coward say that Dried Meat is Deerfoot's birth-name—that the little squaw had lied.

I never slept that night; I never spoke to Dried Meat, and I ate nothing. Beef would not try to arrest him before daylight; for no living man would attempt to take the great Deerfoot in the dark. At dawn my master awakened; ordered me to take down the tepee, and ran out to gather his horses for the march. At that instant a voice rang out in the cold air—"Halt!" I looked out of the tent, and found Beef Hardy and Wade coming from the house. Both had rifles, but

Beef was in cowboy clothes ; and there was nothing in the look of the men to make Dried Meat think of the police. He seemed surprised, and went up to find out what was wanted.

I saw Beef take something from a paper packet. Now I know that this was Deerfoot's picture ; but the two men are so like that this seemed only one more fact against my master. Beef said nothing, wondering, I thought, that Deerfoot should be so careless about meeting white men ; and while he hesitated, Dried Meat, thinking to show off his famous running before the strangers, set off to round up his herd. His feet seemed to leave no mark on the crisp snow ; he ran like a young antelope, and no mounted cowboy could have been quicker in gathering a band of horses. He came back trotting behind the colts ; and then, blushing and smirking with conceit, went back to hear his skill praised by the white men. The name Dried Meat, the shoes, the printed paper, had been bad against him—but the running settled all doubt. Beef laid his hand on my master's shoulder.

"Are you Deerfoot?" he said.

Dried Meat smiled at the pretty compliment, and answered "Yes."

Beef held tight, Wade covered him with his rifle ; and the three moved away towards the house. I began to fear that Dried Meat would submit to the arrest like a coward ; but I suppose he didn't understand at first what had happened. The moment he saw the police horse in the corral he knew all. With a sudden twisting wrench, he slid from the white man's grasp, left the blanket in his hand, and, naked, came down like a deer towards the camp.

"Quick, squaw, my rifle!" he yelled, as he neared the tent. The evil was in my heart, the gun was in my hand. There were cartridges, and as I ran I made pretence of pumping them into the magazine. He snatched the *empty* rifle from my hand, took Willow Creek with a bound, and in an instant was on top of the cut bank, and behind a fallen tree.

Beef Hardy and the Coward came blundering after him, then stood on the bank in the smoke of their empty revolvers, looking up at Dried Meat's ambush with

the frozen creek between. The cut bank was steep and of frozen gravel ; the rifle was like a little blue eye looking over the log, they could hear the clicking trigger, and expected death.

Wade took aim with his Winchester and shouted, "I'll finish the brute from here !" But Beef turned, looked straight at the Coward and said, "Down with that gun." The giant, the beautiful white giant, stood waiting there for his death ; and the Coward sneaked away. Beef Hardy looked straight into the rifle's eye, and never flinched—I tell you I saw him charge straight up the bank believing that Deerfoot's first shot would strike him down. There might be a charge in that rifle—a cartridge I'd left by mistake—my hero was in danger ; I nearly died of fear.

I heard the click of my master's empty gun, saw him leap to his feet, and knew that he was praying to the Great Ghost for help. Beef Hardy had stumbled on the frozen gravel and was scrambling helplessly up the bank. The rifle barrel flashed in Dried Meat's hands, the butt swung round his head—and he

waited, flourishing the weapon, till the white man's head should come within his reach.

I dared not see, my eyes seemed blinded, my brain was reeling—then—then it was all clear ! I stole behind Wade-the-Coward, I sprang, I struck him down with an axe ! I lifted Wade's rifle as Dried Meat prepared to strike ; but still Beef Hardy was scrambling on the stones and did not see. Wade's weapon was in my hands, alive in my clutch—it pointed at Dried Meat's head—and dashed his eyes with blood ! He leaped in the air, and floundered—and fell—but my hero was saved alive !

What have I said ? Major, I lied ! Didn't I tell you I hate this Mounted Police scout to the death ?

Hands off, Beef Hardy ! Hands off, I say, or I'll kill you ! What—you will ! Of course I did—of course I saved you from the brute—my hero ! My master ! My love !

THE BURIED TREASURE

TOLD BY THE STRANGER

"WHAT!" cried the Stranger; "you don't believe in buried treasure? Wall, I swar! Ain't such things? Cost more to find than they're worth? Why, the greatest stake I ever played was for buried treasure.

"Where shall I begin, now—let's see. Wall, I was in love—right in up to the neck. She was a nurse in the hospital; I was a useless orphan gump, with a thousand a year of my own. Says Alick, 'I'm a pro in this here hospital, earning twenty dollars a year. What are you?' 'Three saloons,' says I—'livery stable, and mortgage on the First Baptist Church.' 'What d'ye do?' says she. 'Hang around,' says I. 'Then don't hang around me,' says she. Tell you that was a sickener. However, I tried

again the next year. Says Alick, 'I'm a staff nurse in this here hospital and boss of the surgical ward. What are you?' 'I love you,' says I. 'Well,' says she, 'staff nurses ain't to be had at the price. Sheer off; go and do something.' I just went around back streets, and kicked myself home.

"That night I was packing up to go West, when I came across a sheaf of Pa's old letters, and began to burn 'em one at a time in the stove. Presently I lit on a document writ by my grandmother, Saphira Burns, 'being a narrative dictated by my husband, Zachariah P. Burns, of Millstoneville, Connecticut, a retired pirate, late deceased, having been run over and killed by an omnibus in New York, and lyeth in Greenwood Cemetery, for which the said omnibus company disclaimeth liability, having been intoxicated, and now waiteth in confident expectance of a glorious hereafter. Given under my hand.'

"Well, you bet, I pricked up my ears 'specially when I seen that the whole bloomin' yarn was about a buried treasure. Grandpa Zachariah must have

been a double-barrelled terror. Why, at nineteen, being third mate of a whaler, he mutinied, made his own cousin by marriage, Captain Eliphilet W. Stiggs, walk the plank, swore in the crew over a Russian almanack and a bloody dagger, hoisted the black flag, and started up in businesss as a buccaneer. At first he scuttled coasters in a small way along the Chilanean coast ; afterwards, when he had lost his ship on the Gallipagoes, took to annexing whalers when they put in for water. Altogether, what with marooning, ransoms, and deep-sea captures, he was making a pretty good stake, when, as luck would have it, trade slackened, money got tight, dividends down to nothing—in short, the crew got up on their ear and mutinied.

“ When the ringleaders found Zach, he was sitting in the middle of the cabin on a barrel of gunpowder, armed with dozens of pistols. They told him to come down off that barrel.

“ ‘ I’ll be hanged if I do,’ says Zach.

“ ‘ That’s so,’ said the ringleader, who was a truthful man.

“ ‘ Now,’ says Zach, ‘ I’m bossing this

show. You're going to head her for Panama—nor-nor-east-b-east—and if you ain't dropped anchor by seven bells of the morning watch, I'll blow her up, by George, and this time to-morrow you'll be arranging for your lodgings down below !'

"With a compass in the beams overhead, water and food within reach, why he'd got the dead immortal cinch on the whole outfit ! The crew chuckled on deck, thinking how they'd carve up Zach when he started for to go ashore ; and Zachariah chuckled in the cabin, for when they anchored at Panama Bay he wouldn't quit his barrel unless the new Captain was given up to him as hostage, till such time as he reached the dry land.

"With a pistol in each of the leader's ears he marched upon deck, and went down into the boat. While all the crew hung gaping over the bulwarks, while a slow match fizzed in the cabin, Zachariah P. Burns went safely ashore with his hostage. Yes, there he stood on the beach till the new Captain went back aboard ; he saw him welcomed by the crew on deck, he saw the boat hauled

up—then bang went the ship, and for some minutes the air was plumb full of hurtling scraps of pirate. Zachariah remembered that he was a Connecticut man, and felt quite pleased with Connecticut.

"Ever hear of Lafitte—the Pirate of the Gulf? No? Then you'd oughter. Zach found him at Colon, anyway, outfitting for the fall trade; joined on, shipped as his second mate; and I tell you they made things hum in the Mexican Gulf! Business was booming; why they got so proud that when they spent a Sunday afternoon shark-fishing, nothing would satisfy 'em for bait but live Jesuit missionaries! Mind you, Lafitte was dead nuts on theology—listen by the hour to any sky pilot as happened along—but as he said, 'Romans is pizen!'

"Well, during the war of 1812, old man Zachariah must needs fall out with Lafitte. British General—Pakenham his name was—wanted the Captain to come along and help capture New Orleans. Zach's eyes fairly glittered when he thought of all the loot.

"'It's a great scheme!' says he.

"'Won't work, Zach,' says Lafitte, 'the

Bloomin' Britisher's jolly well going to get licked. I'm going to turn patriot and help give him beans. I'm after a free pardon from the Yanks—you bet.'

"‘Patriotism be blowed !’ says Zachariah.

“ On the way to New Orleans they had to put in for water at the Bayou Teche. Soon as they dropped anchor, and the people were away with the water breakers, Captain Lafitte calls away the jolly-boat and starts out with Zachariah and two ordinary seamen on a little picnic. After some miles they pulled over to an island, where they spent the whole night landing a thundering big iron chest full of gold and jewels. Enough to make your mouth water. Chalices and crucibles, patens without end, snuff-boxes, chains of rolled gold, with eighteen-carat fixings, earrings, necklets, tararas, dimonds, candlesticks—and—etc. Buried it in the beach—yes, of course above high-water mark, smoothed the place over, and murdered the ordinary seamen—which had been selected as the two most useless men aboard.

"‘Now,’ says Lafitte, ‘we can go on to New Orleans with a clear conscience,’

" Next morning when they were about a mile or so at sea, the Captain sent Zachariah aloft to do some kind of monkey business with the fore-royal yard-arm. When Zach got to the place, he found the foot-rope cut neatly away at the outer end till it hung by a thread. ' I see,' says Zachariah.

" Now you must understand that they were in a shallow bay, about a mile and a half out, a big eddy swirling along-shore. While Zach was taking it all in, the Captain sung out :

" ' You goin' to stay there all day?
Why don't you get a hump on, you darned old wreck of a purser's pig—you brass-mounted, brazen - headed jackass—
you—!—!—!'

" ' Ay, ay, keep your shirt on, governor !'
So saying Zach stepped on the foot-rope.

" ' Man overboard ! ' yelled the Captain.
Zach came down with an awful shriek in the water.

" The sly old fox ! While Lafitte lay-to lowering away the boats, Zachariah let himself float gently with the current till they could barely see he was. Then, kicking ~~at~~ at ts, he sud-

denly let out a piercing yell, waved his arms like a windmill, and sank. He was never seen again from the pirate ship.

"Drowned? Drowned nothin'! He was simply swimming under water, putting up his nose when he needed a sniff of air. In half-an-hour he landed at the point of the bay, hauled ashore like a seal, and hung himself out to dry. Lafitte had called in the boats and squared away for New Orleans.

"Nothing like trusting your friends," says Zachariah.

"Dig up the treasure? No; went straight to Mobile, Alabama. There, while he was hiring a sloop to carry the spoil away, the old man must needs fall in love. The lady was young, pretty, widow, four hundred a year—married within a month, and off to New York for the honeymoon.

"Happily ever after? No, he was run over and killed by an omnibus.

"No omnibuses there? Sir! Well, tell the story yourself! Then shut up! There—gone—slams the door, of course—and a good riddance.

"Lafitte? Ran the Britishers out of

New Orleans—free pardon from Legislature and a vote of thanks—got religion, and went into the slave trade.

"Treasure? Now if it had been pork and molasses, I guess—well, he'd have done well in the corner grocery line; but diamonds and jewels—no. I guess, stranger, that down in Louisiana swamps they're hungering more after religion and quinine than any earthly gauds.

"Dead and gone this long time? Yes. Lafitte lived at his island years and years. Nights he used to go down with a spade and lantern, dig up the treasure, gloat awhile, say his prayers to it, and bury it in again. Never fed himself—couldn't afford it. They say he died of want.

"But his ghost keeps up the old regular habits. Yes, sir, every night Lafitte comes down the beach—tall, thin, clammy, with lantern and shovel—to dig there for hours in the sand. You don't believe? Wall, now I do, for I've seen him!

"Yes, you're right. I took Grandma Saphira's document, Zachariah's map, the proceeds of my three saloons, mortgage, and livery stable, and started out within a week for Louisiana. Not that I believed

in the treasure. No, but with a broken heart one must hustle around and do something, or there's danger of whatd'yecallum setting in. So at Mobile, Alabama, I chartered a sloop and started out with two hired men, fishing. Yes, camped on an island near the Bayou Teche, and fished. Talk—talk—talk. I thought those two idiots would never quit jawing. Why, it was nearly midnight before they curled up in their blankets. At last they talked themselves to sleep. My chance was come. I stole away, crossed the island, then followed along the shore till I found my bearings. Dark as a coyote's throat, I could just make out the two rocks up by the timber, when suddenly the moon broke out, and, as I live, there was a man—a tall, dark man—with a lantern and spade digging.

"My teeth rattled. I was perspiring like a pitcher of iced lemonade. I was gone in the knees, something horrible crawling down my back. For there he was, with a face like a death's-head and bony hands digging away in the sand, as though he'd never come to the bottom. At last he struck the chest. I could hear

the cling of his shovel on the lid. He heaved up the top, rummaged around, took something out, which he wrapped in what looked like a shroud. Then the great lid came down with a clang. I could stand no more, but lit out along the beach like all possessed, and crawled back, limp as a rag, to camp.

"Next day I let my men into the secret, for I was ready to share up now, if only for the sake of human company. Moike said :

"'It's all my oi. Oi'm an American citizen. Can't take me in wid ghosts av ould wives' tales, begorra !'

"As to Hans, he'd have no truck mit der teufel aind it. Nod much—no.

"Howbeit, for five hundred dollars apiece they helped me out, seeing that I was a friend. We waited till eleven o'clock, liquored up, and crossed over to the place. Yes, there he was, digging, just as I'd seen before. We watched him open the chest and take something out. Again the great heavy top of the chest came down with a clang. Then we waited till the sand was filled in, and the ghost stole back to the woods. 'Now,' says I,

'is all this granny's tales?' There wasn't a word from the Irishman, for he'd skipped the country ; but the Dutchman lay grovelling. 'Der teufel !' he yelled, 'dake me home.'

"I couldn't stand it. The whole thing was a regular swindle. This treasure—mine by rights—was being stolen away piecemeal night after night by a pirate's ghost. I dragged the Dutchman up, shook him, and filled him with whisky. We came down out of the woods with a whoop and a yell ; we dug up the sand with our nails ; we lifted the heavy chest out of its hole, and had started to drag it away, when a voice rang out of the woods that knocked me cold :

"'Say, there, what in thunder and blazes are you doing with my meat-safe? Can't a man bury his food away from a tropical sun without being plundered by white trash? Hands up, you all-fired idiots, or I'll shoot !'"

THE END OF THE WORLD

TOLD BY JIM BALLANTYNE

A MILLERITE saint was prophesying, with half the farmers of our section gathered around him, in Old Man Johnson's barn ; the street was full of women praying and crying ; the storekeepers were putting up their shutters ; the kids had all broken away from the school ma'am to hide their poor little bodies in the woods. Yes, the whole town was crazy with religion and hysterics except down around Jim Dogpole's smithy, where a score of men lounged against the hitching posts chewing tobacco, while they swore vengeance agin the fanatics who'd gotten up all the fuss. As to that woman, my Step-ma, she was something awful to look at, standing on a buggy right up by the 'Piscopal Church, with her arms going around like a mill, and her sallow

homely face flecked with the foam from her mouth as she prophesied. Her hair was down, her dress draggled with mud, her eyes glaring blue fury !

"Repent!" screamed Seraphina—"repent!" I could hear her yelling all the way up from Jim Dogpole's. "Repent, while there is yet time, for the Judgment is at hand, the Eleventh Hour is come—and woe unto them as haven't joined the Church! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the Earth! Get out your robes, all ye Elect—prepare I tell ye—make ready yer hearts—Prepare!"

Scared almost to death, I came up to poor Dad, and gripped on to his hands for the comfort of touching him.

Now I ain't partial to blasphemy, and there are things which Step-ma said that I'd blush to repeat. Many a better man than me has lost his Faith through mountebank prophets such as Seraphina; but at that time I believed all I was told, took that woman's bogies for gospel truth, and had gotten half-crazed with fright.

So Dad drew me in under shelter of his overcoat; then, thinking nobody was taking notice, he gave me a great kiss

which sent him blushing I guess, and me whimpering. "Cheer up, Sam," he whispered, "keep a stiff upper lip until the end, for the world can't last much longer."

Step-ma was prophesying again, her voice all broke up from long shrieking ; but with Dad's coat for warmth and his arm around me, I didn't care how soon we went to Judgment.

"Prepare ! I tell ye, prepare ! for the very day is come. The End of all things, right on time according to prophecy ! The Last Judgment is due this year, this month, this week, at three o'clock to-morrow morning sharp ! The Last Vigil begins at 8.15 this eve ! Beware—*beware* lest you be found in slumber when the trumpet sounds !"

I heard her let out a great deep groan, I saw her sway from side to side with her eyes like glass, then fall headlong from the buggy in an epileptic fit. It was only the usual thing when she got excited ; so Dad and I just got the neighbours to help to take her over to our house, where we laid her on the parlour sofa and let her be. They stole away scared at her awful straight blank stare, her hands

lifted stiff and rigid clutching at nothing, her thin lips drawn apart showing the teeth ; so we were left alone with her in the room—to watch. Poor Father didn't seem to care—or I very much, because you see three years had made us used to that awful woman. He flung open the windows to let in the rain and wind rather than be shut up with Step-ma ; but presently settled down to light his corncob, as usual, with me on his knees.

"Dad," says I, "weren't you plumb crazy to marry a prophetess like her? She's killing us—ain't she?"

"Like enough," he muttered, "but keep your mouth shut, old man. You see she may be shamming, and we wouldn't like to hurt her feelings, would we, Sam?"

He stroked my head with his big brown hands, and tickled me as I snuggled up closer to him. I asked if I hadn't ought to watch by her till she woke.

"Yes, laddie, keep an eye on her yonder while I get a whiff or two here by the window. Seems like days since I had a smoke." I went over to watch.

Presently he turns round out of the

draught. "Sam," he called, in a sort of stage whisper, "what do they say now down at Dogpoles'?"

"They 'low that if this Judgment business is facts, she's booked for the hottest corner," I sniggered, and so did he. "But, Dad, I heard them arguing that if it ain't proved true by to-morrow morning, they'll—say, what do they mean by a necktie social?"

He turned white as a sheet, but said never a word. The clock was ticking loud on the kitchen wall, the night was closing in blacker and blacker, the rain was sousing down in the empty street. Somehow Dad never thought about supper. There was nothing in the house anyway, because Seraphina had made out we'd sup in Paradise. She'd made Dad give away his down-east home, the stock, the furniture, and half his tools—for you see he was a carpenter by trade. My clothes had gone too and most of his, as a sign, she said, of Faith ; but mercifully there was a little property locked up in trust for me, which Dad had never spoken about since his second marriage.

Here in the hired house there was no

food left, or a nickel to spend on bread ; so Dad sat still in the open window, while I stood shaking with cold, listening to the bubbling of his pipe till it went out. After that there wasn't even the red coal of 'baccy for company, but I daresn't turn round because of those awful hands gripping the air ; and, now that it was dark, I could see nothing but the white of Dad's tucked-up apron as he sat by the window. Somehow at last I got to imagine that the white streak wasn't Dad's apron, but something else lying around in the window-seat ; that Dad wasn't there at all ; that I was all alone, alone with that woman, and the clock that had only eight hours left to tick before the End of the World ! I was only a little nipper ten years old : I was frightened there in the dark with the Day of Judgment drawing on minute by minute. "Father !" I screamed— "Father !"

At that the woman woke up with a start, and I shrank away into a corner, as she went staggering across the room towards the table. She struck a match, which she held up above her head, peering

round with her wicked eyes into the darkness, where I crouched down hidden in a corner; and Dad was sitting by the window fast asleep.

"Awake!" she screamed, "awake out of sleep, for now—where's your robes? Where's your white robes?" She shook Dad until he stood up broad awake, staring at the red end of the match that had dropped to the floor. "Your robes—on with your robes, if you want to escape the Doom."

She wouldn't hear of eating anything, but raved at us because we hunted around with a lamp for some crusts of bread. "Shake off your vile lusts," she shrieked, as she threw a white bed-sheet over her dress. "On! On! Forwards to the place appointed—for the time is come!"

So we marched in draggled sheets, bare-headed and carrying lanterns, with the mud splashing up to our knees, marched through the howling night at the head of a procession of women and kids, following Seraphina to the Circus-pitch, there to await the blast of the Archangel's Trumpet.

Prayer-meetings went on all night with

never so much as a camp-fire to cheer us, the whole crowd groaning and shivering in the rain, while half the men in the country-side hung around on the fence-rails jeering. It was a fearful night ; with the pelting showers of rain, the swirling wind, and nothing but the silence of the fields about us, when at last the wicked got through blaspheming and went home to bed.

But it was worst of all after the clock struck two, for the whole crowd had gone into screeching hysterics ; while the leaders roared out hymns, the children screamed with fright in the wind and darkness. There was a psalm at a quarter-past ; a frantic hymn at the half-hour ; at the quarter-to, the whole lot of us went down on our knees in the mud, waiting in horrified silence. It was then that dear old Dad drew me close to him with a great hug, and gave me a biscuit that he must have begged from some neighbour.

The biscuit was soggy with rain, besides the salt tears that dropped on it, giving it a queer sort of taste ; but it was like a whole banquet to me, with Dad

whispering in my ear about the good times he and I had enjoyed together away fishing on Sundays, or chivying squirrels in the woods when Step-ma was out preaching about the Judgment. I was still chewing the biscuit and crying a little in Dad's arms when we heard the town clock strike three.

Seraphina let out a wild shriek : "The time has come!" Then we waited breathless, while the wind roared and the rain pelted down for a full hour—but nothing happened!

Can you wonder at the men-folk being mad? The poor limp women crawled away coughing and crying to their homes, the little brats went back starving to find the stoves black out, the very blankets given away from their beds. Can you wonder that the men-folk wanted vengeance upon the maniacs who had led us astray?

What with hunger and cold, it was cocklight by the time I dropped off to sleep ; not to rest—bless you, no—for I dreamed of the Last Judgment, with a body-guard of little black goats, to fork me into the Pit—the same being like the

parquette of a theatre, full of rain, mud, wind, hymns, and flames. I woke up with a scream to find it broad daylight, with a slippery black frost on the ground outside ; and I got up in a hurry because of the horrible smell from the lamp, which had burnt itself out during the night. While I was trying to clear the ice out of my wash-basin I heard a queer sound down the street, a sound of something shuffling and slithering in the distance, that came nearer and nearer, until it seemed to be mixed with a buzz of talk calling and answering, the throwing open of windows, knocking at doors, barking of dogs—there was nothing asleep in the whole town except our house. Rushing to the window I saw a crowd of men sweeping round the corner out of the main street, a great black mass of people with guns and axes gleaming among them, and there was a low sound coming up out of the twilight like bloodhounds baying. Then I saw Jim Dogpole at the front of the crowd, swinging a blacksmith's sledge above his head, calling the people on, pointing up at my window, as he broke into a shuffling run over the

glassy pavement, with the whole mob surging behind him.

"Hurry up!" he yelled, "get a move on, or they'll take the alarm. Come on, you beggars—they're awake!"

By this time Dad was astir in the room below, calling to me; so, tumbling down the stairs, I jumped in to help him. He was piling the harmonium, bureau, and stove against the front door, then jamming mattresses into the parlour window with chairs behind. For a moment I looked round to laugh at Step-ma howling with fright in the kitchen; but Dad ordered me to get down the gun and load his revolver, while he added the cooking stove to his barricades.

Meanwhile the mob was ranging up for action outside. "Come out!" they were yelling. "Where's that she-fiend? Trot out your Seraphina to ride the rail! Tar and feathers! Kept our women out in the storm all night! Lynch her! Burn her! Bring her out!"

Dad hauled my Step-ma out into the middle of the parlour. "Now, young woman," says he, cool as ice, "just quit blubbering. You've acted like a raging

fool for weeks and the neighbours are sick of it. You're my lawful wife, worse luck, or I'd hand you out to the crowd. No—I don't want to be hard on you—I'll get you clear of this if it costs me my life. Come, nobody's at the back door yet : slip on a suit of my clothes, and skip the country !”

“Sam,” says he to me, “while I keep the crowd amused, you see her off.”

So I hustled Seraphina into his Sunday suit, his overcoat, and a big slouch hat, while dear old Dad stood at the upper window arguing in a shower of brickbats.

“Hurry up, Sam,” he called down the stairs, “Jim Dogpole’s breaking in with his sledge-hammer, and some of ‘em are running around to the back way. Send her off quick, to the left !”

So he went on argufying among the flying bricks, while I hustled Step-ma out by the kitchen door to head her south-east for the woods. Dear old Dad ! It was just to divert the crowd from following that woman that he defended the house, one man against five hundred, fighting like a lion. I was busy enough now loading his rifle and revolvers while

he blazed away from the parlour window. Bullets were whistling all around us, there was smoke coming up through the floor, the thin scantling of the house front was battered in, but Dad loomed in front of me like a giant with the red glare on his face, and blood streaming from his shoulder where he'd just been wounded. When there were no more cartridges left, I got up to fight alongside of him, for he was striking right and left with his clubbed rifle at the people as swarmed through the window. The parlour was all on fire around us, but, since Dad didn't seem to care, it was no concern of mine. I was pleased all to pieces, getting in straight blows with a revolver-butt, so that more than one man was knocked silly who hadn't reckoned me worth attending to.

Once, when I saved Dad's life by felling a great big teamster who'd have killed him, he found time to thank me with a smile. How he fought ! Even after the rifle broke in two, one man after another went down under his fists, for his blows would have felled an ox ; but it couldn't last, because he'd no defence against the cowardly skunk who opened fire with a

revolver through some holes in the burning wall ; so at last he fell headlong with a mortal wound through his body, and I knew that the end had come. He died in my arms, with his fingers clutching my hand to say good-bye, and a wonderful smile passing over his face as his tired head fell back upon my breast. Then I heard the flames roaring about me, and something struck me between the eyes—and I dropped.

Kinder serious, eh ? Well, it was rather a rum way for a lad to begin his education. They say it was Jim Dogpole who hauled me out of the flames ; anyway, 'twas him as took me into his house, nursed me tenderly as a woman till I got back my strength, then adopted me as his son.

THE GULF STREAM PANIC

BY THE STRANGER.

"SO," said the Stranger, "you want a good yarn? Right you are—you shall have full particulars of the Gulf Stream Panic.

"Being — excuse my bluntness — benighted Britishers, you naturally don't understand the first thing about journalism. English pressmen, you see, are merely polite essayists constrained by a pitiless destiny to sully their pages with news ; whereas our American newspaper is a machine directing the movements of politics and the Stock market in the interests of a plutocrat. Now the biggest newspaper building in New York is the Bearcorner Block, where on the seventeenth floor sits Hiram S. Bearcorner looking down from his office windows upon the abodes of two and a half millions

of his victims. Until quite lately Hiram was my personal friend, so when I hit upon the scheme, just about twelve months ago, my first move was to take an express elevator to his private office.

"'Bully Boy,' sez he, 'I want something smashed all to bits—want something to trample on bad.'

"'Hiram,' says I, 'how about British securities?'

"'Can't touch 'em.'

"'Hiram,' says I, 'what gives 'em their power?'

"'Isolation from the Seething Ruck of old Europe, good supply of coal and iron, and weather that keeps 'em rustling.'

"'Hiram,' says I, 'where does their climate come from, what there is of it? Gulf Stream, of course! Now suppose we turn off the tap.'

"'How?'

"'I've read somewhere that the Gulf Stream used to flow right through into the Pacific until that darned old Isthmus of Darien stuck itself in the way. That's when the polar bears got disgusted with England and quit.'

"'Well?'

"‘Hiram, suppose we sink the Isthmus of Darien and turn the Gulf Stream back into its old route.’

"‘What rot !’ says he.

"Well, sir, that man’s naturally as cold as a fish, but hairs began to stand up on his bald skull by the time I’d shown him my scheme.

"‘Unscrupulous, Bully Boy,’ says he.

"‘Be virtuous,’ says I, ‘and you’ll lose all the fun.’

"‘How much do you want for the job ?’

"‘Fifty thousand down for expenses, five hundred thousand dollars if I succeed.’

"‘Done !’ says he.

"Well, you bet I didn’t give Hiram time to relapse into penitence. That night Bob, my partner, and I sailed for Darien. Not that we let on to be acquainted, for Bob, you see, looked more natural than life as a British sportsman, and as I was only gotten up as a quack doctor he treated me like the dirt under-foot. When we got to Aspinwall Bob put up at the hotel, giving out that he wanted to be called next morning for the Belize steamer, while I crossed the

Isthmus by rail to Panama. There I rented a store and started advertising an infallible pill to prevent fever—never did such a business in my life!

"Next morning Billy wrote me to say that according to my instructions he'd overslept himself and missed the boat for Belize, which would detain him for a week without suspicion. Moreover, he'd found out how to get at the Jamaica cable, and was ready to cut at the appointed moment. Meanwhile, I'd not been idle, for I'd made friends with the Submarine Telegraph people, relieved the Boss of an ague—I'm a dab at faith cures—and discovered that we were distant relations. He got so friendly that he wasted the whole afternoon finding me two trusty natives to send out into the woods after humming-birds. As for the Central and South American cables, why the old fool took me out fishing, just to show me their course over the coral reefs. He was a queer old object, bald as a bladder of lard, vain as a kitten with three tails, and a perfect whale for brandy-and-sodas. But for him I'd never have discovered that the shore-ends of his cables

passed under the verandah of my pill-store.

"At 11.15 on Tuesday evening, by preconcerted arrangement, Bob tapped the Jamaica cable with news, purporting to come from the local correspondent of the 'Associated Press,' of a slight earthquake livened up with subterranean thunder. At half-past he tapped the cable again with his second dose: 'Awful shock lasting thirty seconds from the south-west, ground opened in main streets vomiting floods of boiling water, hundreds boiled alive, Panama reported in ruins, Chagres overwhelmed by sea, all shipping destroyed. Another awful shock this moment, worse than the last. Feel deadly sick—hold on—'

"Five minutes later he sent the last words: 'Great heavens—we're perishing! Whole country going down, swallowed up alive by the sea ! Mercif—'

"At that moment the trusty hummingbird natives, carefully selected by my friend the Boss, were fifty miles away in the bush slashing down the overland wires. As for me I was out in the Bay having a swim, while, thanks to brandy-

and-soda, the Boss was asleep in the boat. I dove down among the coral and cut the cables through in less than no time. That was only supplementary, just to make sure —for before I left home I'd put an electric clock under the verandah, which disconnected the cable-circuits at 11.15 p.m. The Isthmus of Darien was cut off from the whole civilized world !

"Find us out? Yes, if we'd not been electricians. Suppose, in the ordinary course of events, that the Jamaica cable had been broken out at sea; the clerks would have found out by testing how much electric current it took to *carry* as far as the fault. Well, when Bob cut the wire he clapped on at the broken end a coil equivalent to five hundred miles of cable. My automatic clock had done the same thing for the Central and South American lines, so that they appeared to be broken away out in the Pacific Ocean. Of course there was no end of a row; but Bob and I were much too smart to get ourselves under suspicion. The Boss at Aspinwall sent off the repairing steamer to take up the Jamaica cable at the five-hundredth mile, but as to my friend at

Panama, he was so flabbergasted that I went off to bed with a clear conscience. Poor beggar, he never did a blessed thing to repair his broken wires—too much brandy-and-soda.

"Next day? Oh, I sold patent medicines.

"Well, on the third afternoon I was having a quiet smoke and chat with the Boss, when he happened to casually mention that the local 'Associated Press' correspondent had hired a mule and started out at dawn for Costa Rica. The cable-cutting being a prime item of news he was naturally bound to send off his 'copy' somehow; but that didn't suit my views.

"'Ah,' said I, as if a great light had just burst in on me. 'Now I understand!'

"'What do you mean?'

"'His flight.'

"'What?'

"'Can't you see, man? The Panama Canal people are speculating on the Bourse, and some of them have bribed that rooster to monkey with your cables!'

"'I understand!' he yelled. 'The

scoundrel ! I'll ride him down—I'll shoot him—I'll lock him up—I'll——'

"Easy, partner," says I, "keep your hair on. The overland line is repaired as far as Anton—so get out your warrant and wire at once to the local police. This evening we'll follow cool and easy in your buggy and extract a confession."

"Excellent!" he cries. "Capital! If it hadn't been for my lucky guess——"

"Well, anyway, without even thinking of his cables, this idiot started out within an hour, and I with him, in the buggy. Thirty miles out I left the poor beggar tied to a tree, cut the wires, and rode for Costa Rica. I was the new Boss of the Cable Company at their service ; I'd Columbian Government credentials, I was the embodied majesty of the Stars and Stripes, and, if a posada wasn't turned inside out to accommodate me, I'd clap the unlucky landlord in the Alcalde's lock-up and ride on. Never had traveller such a retinue—why I guess I'd half the Columbian Cavalry after me—a sort of military promenade. If I hadn't kept cutting the wires there'd have been the whole population in arms ahead of me.

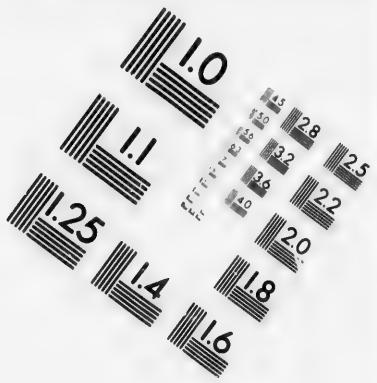
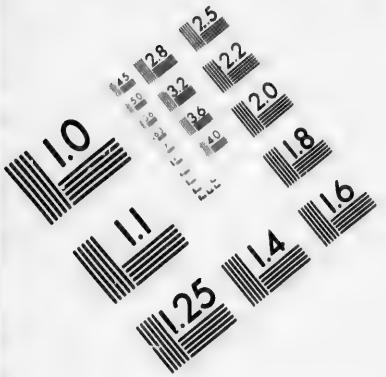
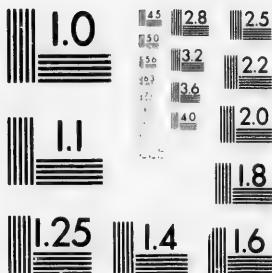
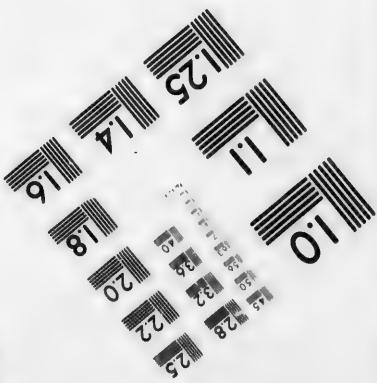
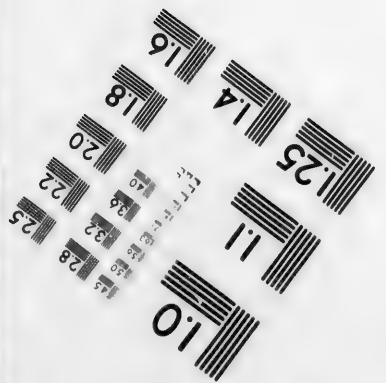
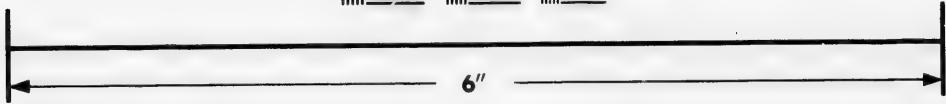


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Escaped? Of course I did, and Bob too, the week after; but I never slept until I struck New York.

"What a time they'd been having in the Stock Market! I tell you it beat the Mississippi Bubble—it knocked Black Friday cold! You should have seen the scareheads in the New York dailies: 'Tremendous Catastrophe!'—'Darien swallowed up! Panama Canal with a Vengeance!'—'Cape Horn out of Date!'—'Commerce unchained!'—'The Northwest Passage created on the Quatua Centenary of Columbus!'—'The Gates of the East Unbarred!'

"But that was only just the beginning. On Thursday morning Hiram Bearcorner got up a yarn that a steamer of the U.S. Coast Survey had arrived at Charlestown S.C. with the extraordinary intelligence that the Gulf Stream had disappeared! The Scientists announced that the great current must have humped back into its ancient and previous course to the Pacific. Great Britain, robbed of her warm westerly winds, was going to be another Labrador. Hence our national rejoicings in the Republic!

"Then came the Gulf Stream Panic. British Securities went down—down—down—till the bottom dropped out; New York awed, Paris in raptures, London in blank despair. The churches were ringing minute bells for the British Empire. Then at 5 p.m. came the gorgeous news that the Darien cables were working—the whole earthquake a fraud—a gambling proposition got up by some enterprising stock-broker.

"And Hiram, who'd held every dollar he had ready for the event, who'd bought in British Securities with every cent of his credit, who finally discovered the fraud in time to rescue the Stock Market from utter despair, this Napoleon of Finance, this Preserver of Society,—what of him? Sir, that man must have cleared a hundred million dollars, yet when I called on him for my paltry remuneration —what did he do? Go down on his ham-bones with gratitude? Hand out half the plunder? No, siree—that sainted journalist had me arrested for foul aspersion of character, and I got a month's hard labour for black ingratitude in an attempt to

blackmail my princely benefactor and friend !

“What? What’s that you say, man? Do you dare to insinuate that I am untruthful? Do you venture to assert that you never heard of it? Call yourself a digitated Biped? You quadrumanous ape! You typical representative of the English bat! You ignorant puppy! Never even heard of the Gulf Stream Panic !”

THE BLACKGUARD'S BROTHER

TOLD BY BILLY

WE were out after those horse-thieves—Corporal Dandy Irvine; Constable La Mancha, and I—out on the great plains, with three days' provisions and enough health, strength, and joyfulness to have rationed a hundred riders. I rather fancy that, except for the “banged” tails of the horses, we might have passed for habitual desperadoes, and have been received with open arms by birds of that same feather ; for in those days troopers out on detachment service left the red coats and pipe-clay along with regimental discipline and tearful recruits at head-quarters.

Little Dandy Irvine was the smartest man in the Mounted Police ; I was the biggest fool ; while Regimental Number 1107, Constable La Mancha, broad of beam, deep of chest, with a bull neck, an

iron grip in the saddle, features stuck on anyhow, eyes glittering with mischief, a swaggering, bullying, irresponsible mass of devilment, was commonly known as the Blackguard. His temper was brutal, his manner ferocious, his obedience to little Dandy Irvine wholly childlike. The secret of this was a winter trip, when La Mancha's brother, the Pup, had been badly frozen. The Blackguard then was paralyzed with cold, but little Dandy saved the Pup from being left to die in a drift. "Fancy taking all that trouble with a bally recruit!" said the Blackguard.

Ever afterwards, when the more pretentious officers found him mutinous, when he turned the sergeant-major grey with worry, when his customary quarters in barracks was Number 5 cell in the guard-room, the only man who knew how to run the Blackguard was that same small corporal. Dandy ruled me also as mind rules matter; in fact, we two had an offensive and defensive alliance, which made an attack on Corporal Irvine a declaration of war against the awkwardest combination on the plains.

How the Blackguard ever came to serve

the Empress is past finding out, he being more Spaniard than white man, and blessed with a title nine miles long. Only his intimate chums knew him for Don Santa Maria Sebastian Iago las Something or other de la Mancha, and not even Dandy could call him Maria without risk of grievous bodily harm. Titles counted for nothing in the Mounted Police ; horsemanship was better than sixteen quarterings.

The Blackguard, with a Mexican sombrero slouched down over his eyes, a grey shirt, canvas overalls, and cartridge-belt all askew with the weight of his service revolver, looked much more like a casual ruffian than an old-world noble. He rode with one leg over the saddle-horn, patting the horse's neck, or chewed a bit of hard-tack to sharpen his strong white teeth, while he scowled darkly at the horizon from under the brim of his hat.

"Devising mischief?" asked Dandy.

The Blackguard vouchsafed a malignant glare over his off-shoulder, but answered nothing.

Presently we struck the Regina-Aspen Hills trail, where we turned southwards,

having made a long detour to catch our horse-thieves from an unexpected direction.

"There's not been a wagon or horse," said La Mancha, "since Sunday's rain."

"As I thought," answered Dandy. "We can camp at Lane's to-night, and if we watch the gentleman he can't send word to his friends. A good square meal, and all night in, La Mancha."

"Look here!" The Blackguard drew up, jumped lightly from the saddle, and, passing his arm through the rein, knelt down upon a patch of alkaline clay.

"This footprint," he said, with a puzzled expression on his swarthy face, "is new since yesterday. A white man, heading south, dog-tire !, poor devil!"

Dandy knelt down beside him, casting his rein to me. "Wore long boots," he said thoughtfully; "bore heavy on the left, as though he carried a load on his right arm. Looks like a police boot by the cut of the sole—a deserter, eh? And here's the right foot in this alkali. By George!"

I dismounted at that, and, as I glanced over their shoulders, Dandy and the Blackguard were exchanging glances.

"Why," said I, impelled by inward foolishness, "he'd lost all the toes off that foot!" I felt quite proud of my sagacity. "It must be frost-bite, eh?"

"Shut your mouth," was Dandy's vigorous comment; and only then I remembered that La Mancha's brother, the Pup, had lost his right toes after the great blizzard.

Poor Pup! Nobody ever told him how dangerous it was to be without moccasins during the early thaws; and when the weather changed, when the wet boots froze on his feet, he went on uncomplaining until he dropped. So he was crippled for life, and, but for Dandy Irvine, he must have perished.

Was this really the Pup's trail we were following? Was the poor lad here alone tramping toward Montana with that open wound on his foot?

At Lane's the traveller, whoever he was, would stop for rest and food; at Lane's we might find a deserter, and that La Mancha's brother.

Out on the plains no harm need come of our meeting, but in presence of a civilian any neglect of duty might get us

into very serious trouble. So it was with many misgivings that we rode in silence hour after hour at an easy canter, with an occasional foot-pace to breathe the horses, until the sun was low. In those early days the buffalo-skulls lay thick about the plains, and far away to east and west and south the white bones gleamed as though we rode on some old battle-field. So very slowly the rolling ground which was known as the Aspen Hills rose higher and higher against the southward sky. How the ground thundered as we three cantered over the sounding turf!—how the gophers flicked into their holes, and the dry bright air swept our faces, rich with the sweetness of wild-briar! Up toward the hills the marigolds and golden rod swayed in the June wind till all the plain shone under the cloudless sky. Then the trader's cabin loomed out through a clump of bushes.

"Hurrah!" yelled the Blackguard. "Let's wake them up for supper!" and he fired six shots from his revolver.

"Halt!" Dandy spoke pretty sharply. "Can't you trust me, Constable La Mancha? Put away that gun."

"I beg your pardon," said the Blackguard. "I didn't mean that, corporal. You know jolly well I trust you; only if that silly ass has deserted, I don't want you to be accountable for not arresting him. Why the deuce doesn't that youngster run?" He held back nevertheless, falling in with me, that Dandy might ride first to the cabin, where stood the trader waiting to give us welcome.

We all hated this "Shifty" Lane for a sneakish officiousness which had more than once got our men into serious trouble.

"Well, what's the best news?"

"How Shermogonish!" (Welcome soldiers!) This trader affected the Cree language. Then he grinned, pawing at his red beard. "Out after deserters, Mr. Irvine? Well, I've got one for you here, if that's good news." The man knew well enough that we hated to fall in with deserters, who, useless to the force, kept better men dancing attendance on them with regimental guard for nine months each.

"Is there no back door to your shanty?" asked Dandy, sarcastically.

"I bolted that." The brute was rubbing

his hands. "You know I'm always glad to oblige the police."

Yes, and to harbour criminals, send false news, smuggle whisky, sell rifles to Indians. We knew Lane well.

The Blackguard had given me his rein while he dismounted ; now he walked up to the trader, and would have struck him with his gauntlet across the face, but the corporal intervened.

"Stand back," he said quietly.

"That's all right." An ugly look came into the Blackguard's face. "I only wanted to insult him a little for fun."

"To insult me, sir?" The trader gasped with astonishment.

"Beg pardon," the Blackguard chuckled. "It is not possible to insult *you*. I had forgotten."

"Silence!" Dandy was hostile now. "You say another word, and I'll put you under arrest." This threat was foolish of Dandy, because non-commissioned officers have no right to threaten.

But the Blackguard sighed. "That is fate; it is destiny; Number 5 cell as usual. Ah, well!"—he turned reluctantly away—"this Lane creature is doubtless a

special constable to arrest deserters from the Mounted Police." His broken English was so deliciously suave that the trader knew hardly where to seize offence.

But if his brother were to have but a minute longer wherein to make his escape, something must be done to keep up the argument. The Blackguard deliberately spat upon the trader's dog.

"This is past bearing!" yelled Lane. "You dirty, measly son of a gun, I'll make you wipe that dog!" and he drew his revolver.

"Constable La Mancha," said Dandy, wrathfully, "will you apologize?"

The Blackguard raised his sombrero with a low bow towards the trader. "I apologize," he said politely—"to the dog."

"Mr. Irvine"—the trader was dancing with rage—"will you stand by and see me insulted like this?"

"Yes," said Dandy, "unless you put away that gun."

And now came La Mancha's brother out of the shanty. Poor "Pup" La Mancha, with his childish sad little face, was hardly made for that rough life of the plains.

"Well, Dups," said his brother, roughly, "what the deuce are you doing here? Eh, what?"

The Dup smiled feebly, "I didn't want to get you into trouble."

They spoke in Spanish now, while we stood by the lad suppliant, the Blackguard rough. But while they talked a different expression stole into the elder's eyes— that savage brutality by which one could always tell 'em the Blackguard was touched to . . . it.

"Say, Dandy"— he turned to the corporal—"of course you've got to take him prisoner?"

Dandy knew that otherwise he placed himself at the trader's mercy. "What's wrong with him, Blackguard?"

"The Dup's in trouble."

"Your brother in trouble? Why, what's happened, youngster?"

"Brothers?" sneered the trader. "A pretty couple!"

"You shut your mouth!" said Dandy. "Yes, Blackguard"—he sighed regretfully—"we must take him to Regina."

"I'll see you in —— first," muttered La

Mancha, as he turned away with me to corral the horses.

"What's up with him, Blackguard?" said I, while we unsaddled.

"There's a girl he's engaged to. In Montana she's got into mischief somehow."

"And the Pop was walking two hundred miles with an open wound on his foot!"

The Blackguard threw back his head with a haughty laugh. "The La Manchas," he said, "are like that."

"What will you do?"

"The Pop will be sleeping in the shanty!"

"And you?"

"In the corral. I hate your English manners. I spit on the trader's dog, and sleep in the corral. In another country I should have buried him first. Who told him to meddle with police deserters?"

"Under any other flag," said I, "there would be a lock on the shanty door."

The Blackguard favoured me with one of his rare smiles. "I don't want to use bad talk about your country, sir. You English are the only people fit to be

Spaniards. Ah me!" he sighed; "I wish I'd shot that trader."

At sundown I went into the cabin, where I found Dandy and his prisoner at supper.

"I suppose," said the trader, while I was washing at the back door, "that it will please your friend to be late."

I took a little of the conceit out of Mr. Lane. "While you keep a public stopping-place, you're compelled to serve all comers; but there's nothing that compels all comers to be your guests."

We all ate our supper in silence.

"Look here, you young monkey," said Dandy to his prisoner, while loading the evening pipe, "if I let you sleep free to-night, will you give me your word of honour not to run?"

The lad looked up to me in some perplexity, but a wink was enough to solve his doubts as to a parole.

"I make no promise," he said.

And of that I told the Blackguard when we bedded down our horses before the night closed down.

"I see," said La Mancha. "Dandy will put him in handcuffs, and lie in the same bunk, eh?"

"Probably."

"Where will he keep the key?"

"In his waistcoat-pocket, hanging up well within reach. He doesn't want the Pup for a captive."

"Thanks to that Lane animal," said La Mancha, "Dandy will be reduced to the ranks if the Pup breaks loose."

Knowing that this was inevitable, it was in no very cheerful mood that I sought my corner in the stopping-place.

Nor was I wrong in divining Dandy's thoughts. Long after he had shackled the prisoner to the side of the bunk, I lay awake considering what would transpire. He gave the Pup the outer side of the bed, hung his waistcoat to a peg on the wall hard by, and slept the sleep of the just. Everything could have been managed so easily, if only the Blackguard had held his peace that evening. Now La Mancha had made the trader his enemy, and, if the prisoner escaped, a ready witness would testify against Dandy. Would the Blackguard let his brother be taken to Regina to serve a nine months' sentence; or would he consent to see Dandy

punished for neglect of duty? And yet there seemed no other alternative.

A man who rides all day will sleep all night; so I never woke until the trader roused me, according to Dandy's orders, at grey of dawn.

The corporal woke also, starting out of his sleep with a low cry of anxiety, rubbed his eyes, and turned round to see if his prisoner lay beside him. Yes, but the man who slept by his side bulked larger in the bed than that fragile youngster chained there over-night. The prisoner, too, had taken all his bedding, which the Pup would not dare to think of. Wrenching the blanket aside, while the trader and I stood by, Dandy found that La Mancha, the Blackguard, had taken his brother's place. The movement awakened him also.

"Well," said Dandy, "you're a nice specimen, ain't you?"

"A very nice specimen," muttered the prisoner, drowsily. "You wanted Number 5 cell, Dandy Irvine, but that belongs to me; I live there."

"You'll get a year for this."

"That's my look-out, not yours," said the Blackguard.

THE CURSE OF WOUNDED WRIST

TOLD BY BILLY

I

THE snow lay dazzling and boundless on the Snake River plains ; and a man was riding across the desert. He was an Indian—not the miserable poor devil Reservation Indian of to-day, but a Crow—and in 1837 the Crows owned the Rocky Mountains, and considered themselves entitled to despise the whole human race. This young gentleman, tall, strong, and handsome, was extremely well pleased with himself. His hair, adorned with eagle plumes, swept the horse's flanks ; his deerskin dress was fringed with the scalps of three full-grown enemies ; above all he had a gun, a flint, lock gun, and cherished hopes of obtaining powder for it next summer. Nothing

save a wife was needed to complete his happiness ; and he was hoping on this present expedition to steal a moderately pretty squaw with a view to house-keeping.

Smoke was rising in the distance, and the Indian bore down at a comfortable lope towards the strange camp. A small band of horses seemed to have been just turned loose on the foot-hills, and down by the spring, a white man, having picketed his gelding within reach, was skinning a deer by the camp fire.

As the Crow drew near this stranger looked up and made the peace sign ; to which, being desperately hungry, the other responded. Dismounting, he turned his horse loose, squatted down by the fire, and, too proud to talk, waited patiently for the white man to invite him to dinner. For some time the cooking absorbed his whole attention, but at last his eye, wandering from the white man's dinner to the white man's goods, fell upon the greatest of all earthly treasures, a bag of gunpowder. Presently he began to feel the qualms of a most painful conscience. This stranger had ammunition, deer meat,

and a beautiful scalp—what a fool he had been to respond to the peace sign ! It was very disagreeable ; but since he had accepted this white man's hospitality he must make the best of it and be content with a very large dinner. He was a warrior and a man of honour—but it was a crying shame that the bag of gunpowder should be within arm's reach, and the man's hair, which would have just matched his new painted robe, be, so to speak, almost within his grasp. And yet he dared not close his hand.

Had Miles Goodyear known his guest's æsthetic tastes the results would have been most disastrous. So long as he did his cooking in deliberate calm he was perfectly safe ; but suppose that from nervousness he had served the meat underdone, and enraged the savage—the present amicable duet might have ended in a scalp-dance, *Pas de seul !*

II

MILES was a young scamp. Leaving his old father to pray for him in the Iowa cornfields, he had while still of tender

years strayed across the Rocky Mountains, joined the Bannock tribe, married three wives, and become a warrior. At the present time he was on the way with his horses to winter pasture in the hills. Though his buckskin clothes were in rags, his moccasins full of holes, and he stood half-naked in the biting winter wind, his bronzed skin glowed with health, his limbs were beautiful in their strength, there was an impudent smirk on his mouth, and from under the tumbled masses of his golden-brown hair flashed out those dare-devil blue eyes that had won for the young trapper his place in the heart of an Indian tribe.

Such were the two youngsters who ate till the sun stood at high noon, and then smoked together the solemn calumet until they nearly dropped off to sleep. At last, however, Miles aroused the Indian ; and, as both were travelling westward, they mounted and set off together, driving the band of horses.

Now Miles, having turned Indian, would not betray a white man's weakness by being first to talk, and the Crow felt accordingly that his new companion was

horribly dull. An Indian may be reticent from having nothing to say, or as in this case silent as a matter of dignity. Philosophers talk so much that common people are apt to attach a fictitious value to silence. The Indians indeed consider it almost as great a virtue as horse-stealing ; but after all, the dignity so becoming when we feel hungry and disagreeable, is a decided bore after dinner. Miles worshipped the Indian for his splendid clothes, the Crow was very envious of the gunpowder—but neither of them was inclined to frivolously interrupt a silence which had lasted since the previous month. Finally the Indian, in a tone of chilling hauteur, caused by extreme shyness, ventured the first remark.

“What’s your name, white man ?”

“The Bannocks call me Two Strike,” answered Miles.

There was a pause. The Indian, afraid that some inflection of his voice might have betrayed the innate contempt of a Crow for a mere white man, condescended to announce his own title.

“I am Driving Cloud !”

Miles observed the sublime manner assumed by a savage, and chuckled.

The Crow, feeling that some further proof of superiority was needed to prevent any unseemly familiarity, made an unlucky remark.

"I am from the Rocky Mountains, the Crown of the whole Earth."

"The world's scalp, eh?"

The Indian was nettled.

"What should you know of the Land of the Big Spirit?—you a mere white man from the muddy-water country down toward sunrise! A Crow's dog wouldn't drink of the water in your country. What are you poor whites—a few scattered ragged creatures, with no home, no tribe, no squaws. You steal no horses, you are wretched hunters, you can't ride, you can't scout because your noses are stopped up, and you're always afraid of war. I wonder you dare speak to an Indian, a Child of the Great Spirit—you whites who have no religion except beaver skins!"

"That's enough for one preaching—"

But Driving Cloud was not to be stopped on the wing.

"And what are you doing," he continued, "among these poor miserable Snakes? They paddle in canoes till their legs

wither and they turn into salmon ; their teeth are worn down from eating sandy fish and roots ; they daren't steal and they're not worth robbing—no one knows what Snakes or whites were made for—”

“ You don't know what a white man is,
Driving Cloud.”

There was something unfamiliar here.
The Indian bent before those clear bright-
flashing eyes of the master race.

“ Where are you going to, Driving Cloud ?
What are you doing in this my country ? ”

The white man's will was conquering
the other's as one masters a horse un-
willingly. The Crow found himself answer-
ing, half-defiantly—

“ I'm seeking a wife.”

“ How nice,” laughed Miles. “ Would
you object to one of mine now ? Number
one is a chief's daughter—a beauty sound
in wind and limb, and I'm awfully fond
of her. The worst of it is that she's got
a blood feud with her relations and insists
on my bringing home their scalps when I
go out walking. As she's related to pretty
nearly everybody, her feud keeps me in
hot water with the whole tribe. You can
have her cheap.

"No? Well there's number two. She was a slave, and I got her in trade for some skins. Deuced pretty she is, but too sociable, and makes love to everything on two legs between eighteen and sixty. She'd run away with you at night, and you'd have all you could do to keep her from making advances to the grizzly bears up in your mountains.

"As to number three, she'd been with her relations forty years, and they got so sick of it that they managed to mislay her travelling. We met. She was starving, and I gave her half a mountain sheep. She ate it, and fell madly in love with me. I had to marry her in self-defence, so now she cares for me no longer. Yet she lives on, has a raging appetite, and sulks furiously. Take her, and I'll throw in either of the others for good measure, and half my ammunition. Mind you, they're all good squaws as wives go; but to have them fighting among themselves like wild-cats is more than I can bear. If somebody doesn't come along and steal at least two of them, I guess I'll run away!"

"White man," said the Crow solemnly,

"a warrior does not take old cast-off squaws to his lodge."

"Like 'em wild eh? Well now, there's Moonlight. Perhaps she'd suit you. I'd as soon marry a litter of tiger pups myself. When I asked for her once she reached out for her father's gun, and her eyes flashed chain-lightning. I concluded I wouldn't marry just then."

"Ah, she'd look me in the face, Two Strike; you can never tell when a squaw is lying unless you see her eyes."

"She is nice to look at, partner, but hard to get, because her old father's so jealous he'll hardly let her out of his sight, and wouldn't sell the ~~shit~~ for all the horses on the Crow range."

"Who can buy a squaw's soul with horses, Two Strike? Her heart belongs to the man who'll keep the lodge safe while her babies sleep. Look at this little bag I have here—it contains the Wampum of the Big Spirit. While I guard this, meat shall hang in my tent; scalps shall I take in battle; and, in my desire, I shall find a wife. I went out into the snowy mountains, and starved four days. It was cold; the snow cut

my bare feet ; the wind never spoke ; the clouds had no word to say ; the rocks had no tongue ; the ice was blind and dumb. On that fourth day there was a storm, for the Big Spirit was going forth to war with his braves ; but he passed me by, and I was never seen. When he had gone it was calm, and I lay down to die ; but I heard a little voice that whispered to me out of the air—just a small voice. It told me of my Wampum, the Medicine of the Big Spirit, that I have gathered up and carry at my belt. While I have this I need bargain no horses for a wife. Where does the old man live ? ”

The sun was going down ; the snow around all tender brightness and azure shadow. Ahead there was a break in the plains ; the Canyon of the Snake River, which rolls a thousand feet below the desert. Out of this chasm there arose a mist—the ground was trembling, the air vibrated with a dull roar. They rode to the edge. There the battlements glittered with great frost crystals ; thence the lava walls fell away through violet shadows into foundations of darkness, and, down in the murk, far below, the

scarlet light of evening kissed the brow of a gigantic cataract. The great river, the Snake, leapt roaring into space ; but beyond and below the falls, down through the mists in the lower night, there was the glow of a little fire.

Miles pointed to this light, and, looking back full in the Indian's face, said—

“That's where Moonlight lives !”

III

By that camp fire sat an old Indian, by trade a maker of stone weapons. But stone weapons, however excellent, were no longer in demand. The white man had come, and from him a gun could be bought for a few skins ; nay, if he were hungry, he would part with it for a dried salmon, or a moderately fat dog. Still the old man worked on from force of habit, piling up his unsalable wares, and grumbling at the degenerate age that no longer cared for them.

He squatted by the fire at his work. His left hand, covered with leather, grasped a rough scrap of volcanic glass,

the beautiful smoky obsidian of the lava plains, and, under subtle blows and pressures of an antler point, this fragment was being fashioned into an arrow-head. The ground glittered with the chips, the tool rapped merrily on the stone, the fire burned cheerily—and the music of the cataract was lulling the day to sleep.

Presently a light footstep sounded among the stones, and Moonlight came up to the fire, threw down a bundle of sticks, and seated herself at her father's side. The Indians thought her very beautiful. To savages we fastidious whites are not quite human, for they cannot distinguish us with their nostrils. The poor creatures imagine that to love a woman is not simply to listen to her opinion on abstract questions; but to feel her hot breath, to see the gleam of her teeth, to bring the blushes to her cheeks, laughter to her lips, light to her eyes, to feel her heaving chest, the fluttering beat of her heart—that is an Indian's love.

Moonlight had a tiger's grace, saucy boldness that was half-fear, lips that invited yet defied, soft hands to caress,

and perhaps stab, and deep black eyes
that none could ever read—and they
thought her beautiful.

To-night she was restless, and fidgeted,
so that the old man growled—

“What’s the matter with you?”

“Why doesn’t something happen?
Why doesn’t somebody come?”

“Ain’t I good enough company?”

Moonlight jumped to her feet.

“But I want something to marry,” she
cried.

“That’s why you refuse every man that
offers,” sneered Wounded Wrist.

“Who? A toothless old fright from
Cœur d’Alene; Young Tail-Spots, who
squealed because his sister threw a snake
at him; Eyes-Behind, the Shoshone Chief,
who never fought anything bigger than a
rattlesnake, and ran away from that;
and a white boy who can’t sit his horse—
as if I’d marry a poor washed-out thing
from Muddy River. No, I want a man—
a warrior; and if he doesn’t come, I’ll
turn man myself. I’d be a better brave,
anyway, than these men-squaws of the
Desert. I tell you I want to get away
somewhere—I’m tired of this hole!”

She left the fireside, and went down to the river, the very fury of whose waters seemed to calm her, making the trouble seem small by contrast. Her thoughts went back to their accustomed course, and she began to dream. Who was there fit to love ?

Moonlight was by no means easy to please ; and had Adonis himself appeared, he might have met with some sharp criticism. In that mysterious twilight the very rocks and bushes seemed to shape themselves as she gazed into the form of her heart's ideal. That tawny rock was like his deerskin dress, the half-seen branch his waving eagle plumes, the night-breeze stirred what seemed like floating hair, and oh ! that dark face of moss was staring as with eyes. How beautiful was this, her vision of a man ! Were he real, how she could cling to him, how she would slave to make his lodge a home ! She stretched out her arms, and rushed forward to clasp the intangible dream, lest it should fade, and leave her desolate ; then, with a shriek, hid her face, and ran away gasping to the water-side.

It was no dream, but a real live man !

"So you are Moonlight," whispered the Apparition. "What, little one, do you like me so much already? Now, what's the use of your pretending to be frightened, because I'm going — don't shriek—to have a kiss! Hush, now! what's the use, child, of trying to fight a great big man like me? Kiss me! No, you mustn't scratch—it's not nice. Now, just cuddle up, and pull my hair, and be comfortable. There!"

Caught and mastered all in five minutes little wild Moonlight wiped some blood off her fingers, and felt rather pleased. This was quite a new kind of admirer ; and, since he would have his own way, there was no help for it ; so for a moment she just sat panting on his knee, and felt happy.

Then came misgivings. The old man was all alone by the fire. Suppose she went away, must he still sit there making arrowheads all by himself, year after year, for ever and ever? No, she could not be so selfish ; but then—

Why was the strong hand loosing her arm? Why was his face lifted from her

hair? Wistfully she looked up, found the young Warrior gazing spell-bound up the Canyon,—and her eyes followed his.

The hanging immensity of lava walls loomed black above, two snow-crowned, overwhelming heights shut out the sky, and, from between, the Stormy Cataract leaped out of heaven. From mighty spaces of silence, from five hundred miles of desert, came these frightened, these accursed waters of the tremendous Snake, and gathered their strength to thunder down walls of darkness in matchless grandeur.

But it is all in vain—the broken life is gathered up below; the wounded River is condemned to live, and, in the silence of despair, coils onward out of sight between the lava walls!

For all the years of her childhood Moonlight had loved the Cataract, her playfellow, her great elder brother; but now, a woman, she gazed upon it with growing wonder and horror. What was this awful Thing that came down wailing out of the Unknown? What was this terrible World from which the River and her Warrior came? Oh! it was better to

stay here in the Canyon, and to be at peace.

With a great cry of fear, she tore herself from the strong man's arms, fled back to the camp, and there fell sobbing in her father's arms.

But Driving Cloud followed.

IV

MILES GOODYEAR, having pastured his horses, returned on the fifth day to the Shoshone Falls. Curious to learn how Driving Cloud had fared with Moonlight, he climbed, by a difficult trail, down the Canyon walls. The fire smouldered, and was almost out ; the old man sat alone. Why was that grey head bent so low ? Why was the Cataract roaring loud, while the Gorge was all so still ?

"Where's your daughter ?" cried Miles, his voice trembling with anxiety.

"What's that to you, white man ?"

"Gone ?"

The old man suddenly cast his tools aside.

"Youngster," he cried, "there's a plague

in the air called Love. It begins with a craving of the heart, and its end is Death. If you've such a yearning, waste it on horses, squander it on stone walls—but not as I did on a woman. A young Warrior came, with his grand airs, and his fine clothes ; smoked my pipe, ate by my fire ; then Moonlight saw him, and I hated him. These long years I have toiled for her love—he won it in a day ! ”

Miles had seen nothing wrong in telling Driving Cloud where to find a pretty wife, but he felt very sorry for the father now. Moonlight had deserted Wounded Wrist in his age ; had left him to go mad, all alone in the Canyon. The old man was clutching an embroidered bag, and there was a terrible light in the sunken eyes, a painful discordance in the aged voice when he spoke again.

“ See, I have stolen his Wampum, the Medicine of his life. Stir up the fire, my son ; throw on more sticks—I’m cold.”

As Miles stirred the embers, and laid on some fuel, the mourner rose, hurled down the talisman into the rising flames, then, with lean hands stretched out, cried aloud into the darkness—

"Master of Life, destroy him while this burns ! Cold shall his spirit stand upon the mountains, when he shall behold the White Lodges in the Meadows of the Dead ! But let him not go in spirit—drag him down ! Drag him away that he may starve, and wander in the sands, and thirst—for ever and for ever—lost ! Great Ghost Above, I swear I will not go, a wanton's father, to the Land of Souls—I will not die till I have slain my child !"

Miles was uneasy. "Of course," he thought, "Old Wounded Wrist has done no harm in burning a bag of charms, and as to cursing his new son-in-law, why, that's the usual thing ; but to follow Moonlight and stab her in the back—she doesn't deserve all that. This old lunatic must be locked up."

There was no difficulty in this. Only two trails led up out of the Canyon, and if these were blocked, the old man would remain a prisoner. Once the tracks of the lovers were hidden by a fresh snowfall, the rock-paths might be open again with little risk to Moonlight. Meanwhile there was need of haste, for the old man might

start at any moment on his murderous quest unless the paths were cumbered.

Miles walked quietly away, and Wounded Wrist, buried in profound reverie, took no notice. The best path that led up to the plains was steep and dark, and as Miles climbed from rock to rock upon the wall, he gasped for breath. At last, at the summit, nearing the level ground, he stopped and looked up, and there against the night saw Driving Cloud alone. His long hair, the fringes of his robe fluttered upon the wind, his coronet of eagle plumes seemed mingled with the stars, and, as he loomed near and gigantic, the white man was afraid.

"Where is Moonlight? Driving Cloud—where is she?"

"Must I be made weary with words, white man?"

"But—you loved her!"

"The hot heart was breaking from my ribs with love. But, Two Strike, I tell you that this Canyon is a more than earthly place. She was a spirit, and she loved me not. I carried her upon my horse until noon; we camped to take some rest. She sang to me until I fell

asleep—then fled—back to her father's lodge!"

But Miles, remembering the curse—

"Her father has gone mad—swear he would not die till he had killed her! Oh, don't say that she's gone back to him! Save her, Driving Cloud—make haste to save her, man—before it's too late!"

V

As Moonlight gained the floor of the Canyon, and picked her way over the loose stones, how dear to her was the old familiar place. Tears blinded her eyes when she saw the glow of the camp fire, the poles of the lodge, the light flickering brightly on the skin wall of the tent. Next to her husband's she craved for her father's love, since all else was sacrificed now to him. How gently he would draw her to him! Would he not lift up that old grey head and laugh, because she was safe? The light would come into his face again, and in his loving arms she would—forget.

She crept softly to surprise his reverie,

came trembling with tenderness and pent-up tears ; and with her face all darkened with the raven hair, sank at the old man's side, and waited in silence till he should give his blessing.

She never saw the red glare in his eyes, or understood the straining of his limbs, or felt the presence of the celt that flashed a moment over her bended head. The blow fell crashing through her brain —there was no sigh, no moan—only a little tremor as the spirit broke away from the flesh. The obsidian bolt, all bloody in the glare of the hearth, leapt like a meteor from the old man's hand, hissed as it sped through the night, and splashed twice where it entered the still places of the river.

There Driving Cloud stood, breathless, petrified, among the trees ; and saw her reel, and stagger, and then fall ; and find no rest upon the rocky bank, but roll, and stay, and roll again with horrible turmoil over the loose stones. The waters bathed her head, her long hair trailed out upon the bloody stream, the ripples mingled with her floating dress, and night closed in upon the drifting dead.

Then Wounded Wrist laughed loud :
“Where is thy Wampum, Driving
Cloud? And she that left a life’s love for
a day’s sport—where is she now?
Where——”

But Two Strike the white man’s eyes
seemed staring into his very soul—then
came a low voice that seemed to strike
like lightning:

“Murderer, she left his love for you !”

While Wounded Wrist stood there the
fire slowly burned away—and the night
covered him. But Driving Cloud was
mourning by the water’s side, and with
the hours came the day’s dawn. The
Accursed River leapt wailing into the
abyss, but yet its shattered life is
gathered up below. The eyes of broken
men behold Despair, but in that long
black night of agony he had learned the
River’s lesson. His brave dark eyes saw
waters broad beyond, the sunlight flash-
ing on a mighty stream, and then the
Bar,—and last the great wide Sea.

THE CAT FACTORY

TOLD BY THE STRANGER

You Britishers, Mr. Billy, think you're darnation cute, but when you want to raise the wind you whistle; whereas we Americans *how*. When you're hard up you go round looking for a job of work which you don't get.

Now we Americans ain't hunting around for a job, because we know that when Trade's down at one end it's up at the other—and we're mostly at the other end. When I'm hard up I get out and rustle.

Don't know what that means, eh? Well, I'll explain.

I'd lost a lot of money selling lightning-rods. Started in right enough I calkilate—began by getting awful yarns into the local papers. "Horrible Tragedy! Struck by Lightning. Five Infants Burnt to a Crisp! Mother in a Mad-house—Pa off

on a Drunk ! Happy Home all Broke-up ! No Lightning-conductor ! "

That fetched 'em ! Every farm-house I went to they brought me that newspaper and just begged me to put up a lightning-rod to save their innocent babes. That's all right. But then you see there were sewing-machine men around who got jealous of my luck, and took to warning folks against wasting their substance on riotous lightning-rods which just polarized the sewing-machines, magnetized the clock, and put the little baby's works all wrong entirely with electrolysis metempsychosis. After that the mothers would say, "I think not ; don't want any new-fangled diseases cavourting around here." It ruined me !

So that's how I came to start a Cat Factory. What are ye laughing at anyways? Where do you imagine the fur comes from? Do you believe that the sable, the marten, the mink, the royal ermine, the stately fixings of the aristocracy, come off 'n wild animals? No, Siree, you stroke the fur sacque of the dowager Porkpackeress, and you think that 'ere sacque is Hudson's Bay and

Siberian sables? Pshaw—go and cool your head! The *Phænix Domestic Cuss*, commonly known as the domestic cat, is responsible for the winter splendours of your rampant Peerage and Porterage; while even the tyrant Czar and his deluded Missus wear sables trapped in the back areas or on the midnight tiles of a distracted Metropolis. Yes, Sir, when the lightning racket wouldn't delude any more public, I pranced out into the boundless West and started a Cat Factory.

You see a maiden aunt happened to pass in her checks about that time—she'd been taking patent medicines, poor thing—and as she left me a couple of thousand dollars in trust for missions to the unoffending heathen, I was pretty well fixed. I located, gentlemen, in Southern Oregon, and bought me a forty-acre lot situate on the bank of a river. At the back of the meadow was steep bluffs flat on top, which reached back a hundred yards or so to the mountain-side. Now the heft of my land was down in the meadow-flat, but one corner reached back on top of the bluff and took in a boiling spring just at the foot of the mountain—which the

same I used to bathe in every few months, the habit of bathing, gentlemen, being uncommon good for the health whatever may be said to the contrary.

Now by winter I'd got the place well fixed-up for a cat ranche, and was away in Portland advertising around for suitable animals, when I heard that an insinuating stranger had happened along and annexed my boiling spring. Back I comes, hot foot with my car-load of pussies, calculating to shoot that same stranger, when what should I find but a large hotel building on the bench, my hot spring turned into a sanatorium, and a clerk with diamond shirt-studs and a large eye-glass to order me off the premises! Swear? I swore until that bench land just quivered, but what could I do? The hotel folks showed a clear title from the late owner of the ranche. Of course I started out to plug a hole through the late owner; but when I came to smell round after his tracks I found that he'd suddenly got religious and lit out for foreign parts. In fact he'd done me up just as if I was a mere tenderfoot, and I was plumb disheartened.

Now I don't want to disparage the works of Nature, but that 'ere hot spring didn't have any medicinal qualities in my time. Sure enough a gentleman—Faro Bill his name was—had died in the bath once, but then he'd had his mouth under water at the time, so medicine or no medicine he'd have been drowned anyway. Fact is I was well acquainted with the "drummer"¹ as supplied the chemical ingredients for the spring. Gentlemen, that sanatorium grieved me—for it was a fraud.

What's the use of a hundred-dollar stranger litigating with millionaires? I seen a little rat once bucking agin' a hog, but when they got through fighting *there was no rat*. No justice for me, you bet—unless I kin buy up the jury. I sot down at the foot of that bluff, to make them bloated summer hotel plutocrats wishful that they'd never been born. Cats when they're left to themselves breed at much the same rate as mosquitos, curates, and southern Irish; which means that if they weren't occasionally thinned out by an exasperated

¹ Commercial traveller.

public the piling up of the critters would disturb the terrestrial gravity and spin the whole blooming planet into the adjacent infinitudes. Wall, one car-load of cats multiplied by itself three times a year makes a total of sixteen car-loads.

"How did I feed 'em?" Oh, that didn't bother me a little bit. There was a United States cavalry post only two miles away, so I was able to buy up all the dead horses. "What killed the horses?" Well, fact is, partner, that they'd so little to do they ate their heads off.

But to continue. Sixteen car-loads of cats—well, what's the matter now? "Market?" Why of course there's a market. A good black tom-cat pelt fetches two dollars, while the imperfect skins is dyed into bear, musk, marmot, ermine—and in fact all wild animals in general, except snake-skins, which are manufactured in Birmingham.

Well, to resume. Sixteen car-loads of black pussies, multiplied by itself three times for the second year's increase, pretty well stocked up my cat factory. You couldn't hear yourself speak for miles

around ; while as to the sanatorium, they had to pay a caretaker three dollars a day and his ear plugs to induce him to stop in the hotel. Them capitalists came to me on their bended knees—but think I'd sell out? No, I ain't party to any sanatorium that steals a poor man's bath to defraud invalids.

My cat factory continued to be a howling protest against the tortuous immorality of the speculator—besides they didn't offer me enough.

Them capitalists was so hostile that you could track them across country by the blue swear-streaks they left in the air. They couldn't prosecute me for nuisance because I started my cat ranche before ever they were heard of in them parts. As for me, I just fed an extra cavalry charger to my little pets so that they yelled that night one horse-power louder than ever.

The hotel folks got desperate. Their sanatorium had been shut up two whole years like a baronial castle with a bad attack of the ghosts ; the whole state of Oregon was laughing at them ; they couldn't have me shot for fear of offending

the tourist interest ; while, as I'd told a dozen reporters how the hot spring was drugged, it had already cost the directors fifteen thousand dollars to prove it was natural medicine. "So I beat them?" Now, stranger, that's how you jump at a rash conclusion. The moment them directors found out that their investment was no good to them, they bought water-rights in the mountains, built a flume, turned on giant hose, washed out a deep trench at the back of the sanatorium, and one fine night, while I lay in my little bed in the cottage by the river, down came that gravel-terrace three hundred feet high, including the sanatorium and the fee simple of the estate, with a horrible roaring smash, slap-bang on top of my cat ranche ! There wasn't a kitten left to howl. Gentlemen, the rest is silence.

"What did I do?" Wall now, what a question ! Do ? Why, can't you see that the sanatorium was trespassing on my ranche—that the said trespass had done grievous bodily harm to my pussies, having wiped them out as aforesaid ? The newspapers suggested a repussification ; but no, after that catastrophe, I'd had

furbearance enough. I just turned right round on that hotel company, and got judgment agin them with damages to more than the full appraised value of the cat factory !

THE TRAGEDY OF THE 'SEA-BIRD'

TOLD BY THE CAPTAIN

When he was dying, a month after Sunrise

WELL, since you must know, I'll tell you fellows what I never told before, but if any man repeats this story while I live, I swear I'll kill him.

Why did I go these last seven years among the Coast Tribes with whisky? Why, if I live, shall I go again this summer? To carry damnation among the Indians—because I'm at war! Three thousand there were in the Broughton Archipelago, one thousand are dead, the other two thousand I have yet to kill. Horrible, isn't it? But then you see war is always horrible. Of course I might have had a gunboat sent up to shell a village or two, but then the Indian Department would pay them compensation

afterwards for having been so unkind. Is that enough to satisfy me for the message that killed my wife? Will that make amends for the death of my only son? No, I have better weapons—*delirium tremens*, starvation, and raving madness.

In 188—, after I left the sea to settle down in Victoria as I thought for good and all, my old woman consented that Fred should have the wish of his heart and be a sailor. I didn't want him to go away in a strange ship until I had broken him in; perhaps the truth of it is that I was sick of loafing around in the garden; anyway my little schooner the *Seabird* was idle in harbour without any chance of being chartered until the spring, so I thought it would do Fred good to learn the rig of a fore and aft vessel, the hang of a tiller, and the nature of coastwise trade. I engaged two A.B.s I knew well to help work the vessel, and managed to get half a cargo for Alert Bay and Fort Rupert, which lie to the norward on the inner coast of Vancouver Island.

We sailed from Victoria, and all went well until we got into the Broughton Archipelago, which lies between the

northern part of Vancouver and the mainland. The group is supposed to contain about ten thousand islands and rocks, and long fjords run off into the mainland.

It was late in the fall of the year, and we had a south wind blowing in squalls, with heavy rain. I didn't care to risk travelling by night in those channels, so I usually anchored at sundown. Now, I knew that the Euclataus on Johnstone Straits have a bad name, so I was not anxious to put in at one of their villages. But when I ran for a little deserted place called Blenkinsop Bay, I found there a whole tribe of Indians in camp, probably on their way home from the Fraser River salmon-fishing. Just as we dropped anchor an Indian came alongside to ask what we had to sell, and one of the sailors yelled out "Whisky!" for fun, he said. For fun I kicked him down the forecastle, and told him to mind his own business.

After supper I felt uneasy, but thought that an anchor-watch was hardly necessary. There had been no trouble with these Indians for nearly twenty years; they wore civilized clothes, and had a

wholesome terror of British gunboats. Would to heaven that Fred had had some one better than a natural-born fool to take charge of him! The Indians believed we had a load of liquor on board, and there was no such kept!

The lad lay back in his bunk chaffing me until I fell asleep, then fired a boot at me out of sheer impudence, to let me know I should go to sleep properly, and not snore. Once I woke up and saw him by the light of the cabin-lamp, with his head nestled in the bend of his arm and the wavy brown hair hanging down over his forehead. He looked as pure as a little child. Oh, how I ved the poor boy!

I woke again with a start. There was a sound of tramping feet on deck, scuffling, swearing, and then a loud yell. Fred had left the cabin. Taking my rifle from the rack, I jumped on deck. There lay my men in their blood, and scores of Indians were swarming aboard from every side, brandishing knives, yelling, and firing their guns. Of Fred I could see nothing. I fired once and missed, and then, as they made a rush

aft, I threw away my gun and jumped overboard. Once I rose close under the stern for air, then dived again, and swam down the bay with the ebb-tide. Perhaps I was taken for a seal, for no one shot at me when I rose again for air. Finally, I landed and took to the woods.

Meanwhile the Indians amused themselves getting drunk on what liquor they could find in the cabin-lockers; and when they fired the schooner, I'm glad to say two of them got burnt to death in consequence. That made a total loss to them of, I believe, five men, all of whom, according to Indian law, must be avenged, life for life. I crept to the edge of the timber and saw the little craft blaze up while all those devils hung round her drunk, fighting among themselves, as their canoes swayed to and fro in what looked like a sea of blood. There was no sign of my son.

In the morning I was captured, after a good set-to with fists. I should have been shot, but that I began to talk French, bow, smile, and gesticulate just as I once saw a little barber do in Marseilles when the police came to arrest him

for having too many wives. They thought I was crazy and inspired. A doctor came up before me and began imitating a bear or a whale—I couldn't quite tell which—and then tried to flap his wings like an eagle or a duck. In a voice resembling a circular saw he claimed me as his property ; and finally I grabbed him by the nose, looked earnestly into his eyes, and intoned "Mary had a Little Lamb" and "Rule Britannia." He walked before me like one inspired—and I was saved !

The Indians lashed me hand and foot in a canoe, and broke up their camp. An hour later we were threading the channels of the Archipelago, and that evening reached a village which I recognized as Mamalillicullah, at the mouth of Knight Inlet, one of the great fjords. There are about a score of large, low-gabled Indian houses fronting upon a little bay. Several of them are covered with grotesque paintings, and before them rise poles capped with figures of impossible beasts. Behind the village I noticed that many of the trees at the edge of the big timber had coffins lashed in their tops, and the lower branches all

cut away—to prevent the bodies from being stolen, the Indians said. I was carried into one of the largest houses, on which I had noticed an inscription :—

"HYAS BOSTON TYEE,

he give awa 3000 blankits every wonder." The title means in English High American Chief. My modest host sent me out next day under guard to cut firewood, but the guard got two black eyes and a broken head, and it took the whole tribe three days to catch me. That made them think that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, so I was roped down to the floor in a corner of the house, and fed on any dried salmon that was too wormy for my owners. When the dogs got hungry they would come and sniff at my legs, but found too little meat on them for a good bite. As the weather grew colder, and the wind poured in through the cracks, carrying rain or snow, I would lie straining for a glimpse of the fire burning brightly in the middle of the house, for even that was better than nothing. Day and night I thought about Fred, and wondered what had

become of him. Once the women had a feast of berries and rancid fish-oil, and one of them brought me some in a bowl. As she stooped over me, I asked her, in the trade jargon, what had become of my son, the young white boy on the schooner. Her eyes reddened, and I think I heard a sob as she turned and ran away without answering. That night she crept up to my side and whispered, "They are keeping you for the *Ha-mad-si*." What was the *Ha-mad-si*?

A month passed, and I could see through the cracks that the snow lay deep round the village. It was bitterly cold. The High American Chief came to look over his treasure-boxes piled up near where I lay. He found a "strong paper" from a white man, and threw it to me to read. It was a testimonial that the bearer was the biggest thief on the coast. I said it was a very good paper, but that if he would tell me the fate of my boy I would make him a much stronger one. You know an Indian considers a white man's order for money as good as cash, and that gives him great faith in any kind of writing. The chief

produced some paper bearing my own monogram. I bled a dog for ink, and trimmed an eagle plume for a pen. My testimonial was a very strong one :—

"*Mamatillicullah, Mouth of Knight Inlet :*

"December 1884.

"To whom this may come.

"Have bearer, Hyas Boston Tyee, arrested on charge of murder. On October 18th last, at Blenkinsop Bay, Johnstone Straits, my schooner *Seabird* was captured, plundered, and burnt by this tribe, and two seamen, Robin Steele and Hans Johnson, murdered and burnt. My son, Frederick, is missing, and I am a prisoner here, getting very weak.

"Forward this at once to the Local Government, and a copy to Zaccheus Wade, solicitor, New Westminster.

"Yours sincerely,

"RICHARD KENDRICK."

I translated this to the chief, and he was delighted at all the kind things I had said of him, although I don't think he ever showed the testimonial ; but when I asked him about Fred, he grinned and

said, "Wait for the *Ha-mad-si*." Ungrateful brute!

Somehow I managed to make friends with his son, a good-looking young savage. From him I learned that the *Ha-mad-si* is a man-eating ghost somewhere in the mountains. He gives his name to a secret society which exists in all the villages of this nation. He himself was going to be initiated that winter, and would have to stay in the woods naked, and without food, until he met this delightful ghost. Then, when all the tribes were gathered together, the initiates were to come into the village, and I would know all about it. As he spoke, a little boy jumped up from behind him, and said, "Ha, ha ! they'll eat a white slave !" From that I supposed that this young man had a rather too special interest in me, and I dropped his acquaintance from motives of delicacy.

Only six miles away, on the island opposite to the village, was White Beach, where a trader lived. I decided to steal away privily with the public larder by night ; not that I desired to put anybody to inconvenience, but rather that I did

not wish to incommod the public digestion. From White Beach I would send my compliments and a side of bacon as a substitute, with a little strychnine on it by way of condiment. My rope did not bother me much, for it was not dirtier than wormy salmon, and my teeth were strong. At midnight I had eaten through it, and was free. The fire still smouldered, and the people were lying round it asleep in their blankets—several families of them. I crept to where the pans were lying, hoping to find some bread, for I wanted that almost more than liberty. There was none. Reflecting as to whether I would taste fishy after such a diet of salmon, I stole to the door. There lay the canoes hauled up on the beach; the black water reached away among snowy islands, and there was not a sound. Then I must needs stumble, and in an instant all the dogs were yelling, and people began to swarm out of the houses with guns. I crept back to my old lair and lay down.

Another month passed, and it was just the same, except that they had a guard over me at night. I didn't mind much,

save that he always slept sitting up, which made his snoring convulsive, and kept me awake. The cold became intense, and the dirt troubled me—but I won't tell you about that. There is one thing, I didn't pretend to be mad any more—there was no need.

I remember when the tribes began to gather. The High American Chief gave away three thousand blankets, and received in trust a copper escutcheon, black with age, and covered all over with ugly eyes. All day and all night the doctors rattled and howled beside a sick woman in the next house, and sometimes I heard them jump up and down on her chest to drive the devils out. They drove something else out too, and she was buried in a tree.

After the giving away of the blankets the devil-dances began, and were kept up night after night. The dancers wore wooden masks with animal faces that winked, and gaped, and flapped their ears. These came out one by one, and posed and stared all round the fire for a minute or two, while the musicians chanted and beat time on a board. Before

the dances came to an end three naked men appeared in the village. Each had a plaited ring of cedar-bark round his shoulders, and another about his head. When they came into the house people cried, "Ha-mad-si." A man ran up to one of the initiates, whom I recognized as Yelth, the chief's son, stripping the shirt from his own arm. Yelth stooped and bit savagely, and then spat out the living flesh. Day after day the three came into the villages and bit men, women, and children.

And then all the people gathered in the house one night, and a great fire was built up on the hearth. They dressed me up as a doctor, sprinkled eagle-down on my hair—I was too weak to resist—and made me sit in the seat of the chief, facing the fire. I heard all the people laughing at me, but my head ached, and I was very weak. They were all looking towards the door, chanting loudly to the beating of a board. I saw a yellow cat walk across near the fire.

The door opened, and the naked men came in, bearing a body all shrivelled up and dry. They were bending down, and biting it and cutting off strips to eat.

And then they brought it nearer, and I recognized that it was a man's body, very white—yes, very white. Presently I saw the face, the dead face, and everything around grew very dark. It was very dark, but I knew it. *They were eating my son!*

I remember that I was lying in a canoe, and the Indians were paddling softly, and chanting low. I felt the rise and fall of the swell, and the ripples under the bow; and I looked up, and the air was clear and warm, and the sun going down. And there, ahead, I saw a mountain about a mile high. A few trees grew on the cliff; but the top was crowned with thick ice. The snow was melting, and all over the face hung a lace-work of white cataracts tumbling and leaping down in the warm air. Then the channel turned, and ahead there was a pale golden wall, not so high as the other mountain, for I could see trees on the crests, where it was cut in sharp spires, with one great dome below. The canoe put in behind that rock as the night closed down. After that the cold came.

The Alps know no time and are weary ; but they let their glacier tongues lick up all the warmth of the cañons : only the fjord swallowed up their avalanches. Out of the grey lips of the clouds came hurricanes, and the little bitter waves crouched down and avenged themselves on the cliffs. The lightning was frightened at the echo of the thunder, and all the little birds hid away from the rain. Then all that was grey above became white below —and the cold came down.

"Oh ! Almighty God, make it very cold, and take away their food, for I am weak to kill so many all by myself !"

At last I looked up on the warm day, for the sun shone—and there was the face of a white man bending over me. .

A COWBOY ON 'CHANGE

TOLD BY JIM BALLANTYNE

"PRISONER gives his name as Jones," said the officer, chuckling. "He's ironed hand and foot for fear of accidents ; but mind, if he goes for you, yell, and I'll let you out."

So the deputy warden threw open the grated door.

"Prisoner—here's yer lawyer ; and I warn you, if you smash him up you won't get another."

The door swung to behind me, but so dark was the cell that at first I could see nothing of "Mr. Jones."

"Good-afternoon — ahem !" said I feebly. One never knows what may happen in the Bitter Root City jail.

"I ain't going to hurt you," growled the prisoner. "Sit down ; make yourself at home."

The voice was manly, resonant ; the man was a young athlete ; I could just see that his boots, being the nearest part of him, were the dainty high-heeled wellingtons of a cowboy ; while the rest of his dress—a sombrero, shirt, overalls, a broad web belt, and silk handkerchief round the neck—bore out the character. The man's presence already brought up some faint memory ; indeed, I felt that I knew him, but not under the surname of Jones. Surely this sunburnt young frontiersman was some old friend !

"I can't offer you any refreshments, Mr. Lawyer," said the boy drowsily. "The accommodations, in fact, are slim—very slim. Why," he woke up, "what the deuce are you staring at?"

"Jack Brancepeth," I ventured, "don't you know me ?"

"What? Williams major? Hurrah! Shake, you duffer!"

It was not easy to shake hands, for my old schoolfellow was shackled spread-eagle fashion to the bed.

"Yes," he laughed, "they've got me roped for branding, and then they'll clip my ears, and corral me all by myself,

lest I corrupt the good manners of the other victims."

"Well," said I frankly, "it jolly well serves you right. A fool who amuses himself shooting the stockbrokers on 'Change ought to be—"

"Smacked," said Jack. "I knocked out three deputy marshals, damaged one sheriff, bored a few holes through things generally. I only wish I could chew up some more police by way of dessert. I feel as happy as a chip."

"Look here, we're civilized people in Bitter Root City, we're not used to cow-punchers."

"Well, you don't amount to shucks, as you say. Look here, I want you to let down the bars of this corral, I've been lonesome."

"How can I get you out? Don't you see, these stockbrokers are not used to being shot at?"

"Yes," he groaned, "that's what's the matter. I've offended their little local prejudices. But that's all right!"

"All right for state prison," explained.

He only chuckled.

"Well, I did it all up, come. But, as I say, that's all right. I'll tell you the

straight yarn—then you can turn it into the right kind of lies and have them sworn to. See?"

"Go on," said I.

"Well, to begin with, I got me a tract of meadow-land up Wild Creek, back of Branchville, Idaho—do you know the place? No? Well, I stocked the ranche out of what I'd saved, with a short-horn bull—by Climax—together with thirty-nine head of scrub cattle, and a band of ponies. Since then whenever I've happened upon mavericks—unbranded cattle, you know—I've adopted the poor orphans, clapped on my little Q—that's my brand—and turned 'em into the pasture. There's been some satisfaction in annexing old Silas Hewson's calves, but even then it ain't over and above square dealing, besides which it's slow work building up wealth out of strays. So I suppose a hundred head all told would make up the sum of what I had last fall, though since then I've been laying by my thirty dollars a month cow-punching for the 'Square Triangle' outfit down Boise way, which money I've put into improvements on my Wild Creek ranche."

"You seem to have been on the make."

"Yes," Jack heaved a great sigh, "but it came deuced tough. Why, I've sworn off poker, quit getting drunk, even tried to worry along without cussing."

"But why all this virtue?"

"Why, don't you see, you loon—you pilgrim? I'm in love!"

"Oh."

"It was all for Kitty's sake."

"Who's Kitty?"

"She's my girl. Say, do you know old man Hewson—down to Idaho Flats?"

"What, the capitalist who floated the Grubstake Mine?"

"The same. A right smart silver proposition is the Grubstake. Why, I guess the old man must be worth his cool five millions now. Anyway, he's got six head of young fillies, that there ain't the like of west of the Bitter Root Mountains, calkers, and away up at that."

"Blooded?"

"I should smile. Out of the very best Virginian, and old man Silas ain't no slouch of a sire. There's Kitty, Saph, Matred, Nehushta, Zebudah, and Mehita-

bel, all raised on the ranche, all tended
the same school at Wild Creek."

"School!" I howled; "do you mean
the man's daughters?"

"Well, rather! Think I'd fallen in
love with one of his mares? You see a
man needs lots of wealth to pretend to
any of these girls, for Silas is like them
Old Testament chiefs who'd see lords and
dukes sniffing around the lodge, and let
the dogs at 'em because they weren't kings.
She's too good anyway for a common
scrub cowboy like me. Oh, man, but
you should see her sit a bucking horse:
she's the west wind riding a cloud, with
the bright hair flying around her head,
and her eyes like stars. The broncho
tears up the ground, but she laughs as she
drives home the spur, and there's no fear
in her. I've fought two men for fooling
around her already—one with rifles on
horseback, he's in hospital; the other
shooting at sight with guns, but I hunted
him out of the country."

Jack Brancepeth always was hand-
some, but now, as he laughed in tri-
umph, I felt that Miss Kitty had no
need to rue her choice, for this gallant,

simple, boyish lover had the face of a Galahad.

"Yes, that's why I've been trying to keep straight. Why, I'd be a mangy hermit if I could make myself good enough for her. I tell you what, when a man's got an option on such a piece as Kitty Hewson, why it's worth while rustling. But, as she said, the old man would never let me have her unless I'd lots of wealth. I've tried hard enough, but then we'd been engaged more or less for two whole years without my making my pile."

"But," said I, "this doesn't seem to have much bearing on the present trouble."

"It hasn't, eh? Well, you reach your hand into the left pocket of my belt, and you'll find her letters. There, that's right; now read the one on top."

So I found myself glancing over the first of a batch of letters in a fine round school-girl hand like a string full of knots.

"DEAR JACK," wrote Kitty Hewson, "if you want me don't be a fool. Here's Paavouring Daddy Longlegs, who wants

me awful bad. He's given Daddy Longlegs a straight tip how to make his fortune. Pa told him that they've just found a tremendous lot of silver in the Grubstake mine; but the principal owners are lying low, and saying bad things about the mine until they can rope in all the stock, whatever that means. Anyway, they've broken down the pumps on purpose to let the works get flooded, so as to hide what they've found. Daddy Longlegs has sense enough to speculate in Grubstakes, you haven't.—KITTY."

"Yes," continued Jack, "Kitty's pretty straight goods, and when she means a thing she says it. If Daddy Longlegs had a thousand dollars, I was worth two thousand; at least that's what I realized in hard cash by selling my ranche to a tenderfoot. So I rode down here to Bitter Root City, went to Kitty's uncle, Hi Hewson, the stockbroker, planked down my roll of bills, and said: 'Buy Grubstakes.'

"'You hadn't ought to buy outright,' says Hewson; 'you should cover.'

"'What's that?' said I.

"‘It means,’ said he, ‘that you plank down your money, I run the show ; if the stock goes up, I sell out when you think that you’re pretty well fixed for life ; if the stock goes down two thousand dollars’ worth, you lose all you’ve got.’

“‘I’ll gamble,’ said I, ‘with all I can hold down by sitting straddle.’

“Well, you should have seen the brokers guying Hi Hewson in the Mining Exchange, and afterwards I heard them talking among themselves in the Coffee Palace.

“‘What,’ says one Smart Aleck, ‘you think Hi Hewson’s working for Silas, eh ? You must think Silas P. Hewson’s gone ‘loco’ ! The old man confessed only last week to a friend of his’n that the mine’s played out. Why, the works are chuck ablock with water, and no tunnelling facilities to drain it ; the pumps have broken down, and of real pay ore there isn’t a dollar in sight.’

“‘A level head has old man Silas,’ says another ; ‘as to Hi Hewson, he’s roped a sucker who thinks he can gamble—some fool of a cowboy, he says.’

“‘There was another sucker last week,’

says Smart Aleck, 'Daddy Longlegs they call him—planked down a thousand dollars on a falling market, he ! he ! Well, he's busted now, cover all run out.'

"At that they all drank a toast, 'Long live the suckers ;' but, well, I laughed.

"Now read the second letter," said Jack.

"You're a daisy," I read. "Daddy Longlegs has come back dead broke, and his language is just disgraceful. Hold on, keep a tight hold on, Jack, for Pa says he'll soon be letting the cat out of the bag, so if the stock goes down any more you must keep a good heart and hold on.—KITTY."

"That's all right," said Jack, "but by the time I got the letter on Monday morning my cover was running out too. Says Hi, 'It's all your own fault ; you never took the trouble to ask my advice, or you wouldn't have bought till to-day ;' but that was poor consolation, for I was like to be as big a fool as Daddy Longlegs. When the Exchange closed on Monday, the Grubstake was quoted at

forty-three, and if it went a point lower my two thousand dollars was lost. Read the third letter."

"Hold on to the stock," I read. "You needn't have been jealous of Daddy. He ain't in it, never was, for I love you, old boy. On Wednesday morning the news will be in all the papers that the Grub-stake was flooded on purpose to keep the secret of a great bonanza ; your stock will be worth a fortune. Hold on for my sake, darling. Hold on for all you're worth.—KITTY."

"At that I plucked up courage," said Jack cheerfully, "sold my horse, saddle, rifle, 'shaps,' lariat, spurs, coat, watch, everything ; and planked down the cash with Hi Hewson. I could hold on now, he told me, till the stock dropped to forty and a half ; but if it went below that I was lost.

"On Tuesday I went to the Mining Exchange Building with my heart in my mouth. The stock opened at forty-three, then a little was sold at forty-two, and at noon it stood at forty-one and a half.

Scared, almost crazy, I grabbed hold of a reporter, stood the drinks, and loaded him up with news. I told him to say in his paper that the Hewson outfit was bearing down the market, that Silas had flooded the mine to hide his bonanza until the moment came to shout. But the reporter made out that the next edition came out at four o'clock, and the Exchange closed at half-past three.

"'Get out the posters early,' I told him, 'bribe the printers, work the ropes somehow, and if I win my game, I won't forget you.'

"The reporter winked and started to write out his news ; but when the market opened again in the afternoon there seemed to be no hope left, for the stock was at forty-one and a quarter, with only three-quarters of a point between me and perdition.

"From where I stood in the public gallery I saw the brokers whispering, for a rumour had got wind from the printers that made them crazy. Some of them were offering forty-three, forty-four, even up to fifty for Grubstake stock ; but there wasn't a dollar for sale. 'Twas old Hew-

son's broker that started the counter rumour making out that the newspaper yarn was some fool's canard—or else a tale gotten up so that the holders could sell out in a hurry. I was paralyzed when the bidding stopped short; I didn't know one more move that could save the game; I was ready to kill myself.

"Hi Hewson sent up a clerk to say he hated to see me ruined—I'd better sell. It was decent of him, but I told the clerk to go to blazes, and further, before I'd throw up my hand like a white-livered coward.

"At three o'clock came a telegram from Kitty that said, 'Be brave. Pa has bought all the stock he wants, and wired his broker to quit 'bearing.'

"Oh, man, but she was worth fighting for. She's an angel out of heaven, and I'd rather have died than broken faith with her.

"The clock was going so slow that it seemed to have stopped. Five past three, ten past, quarter-past three; the stock at forty-one! Twenty past three, twenty-three past! I was saying my prayers with my revolver ready in my hand for

death if I lost the game. There was a commotion down below in the hall—a rumour was spreading through the crowd, till it rippled up into the gallery, and I heard the news: the Grubstake Syndicate bankrupt!

"I knew it could only be a lie gotten up by old Hewson's broker. I knew that in another moment the newspaper posters would be fastened up at the door. I knew that if the market held still another three minutes I'd saved my game.

"The fool at the blackboard was marking the closing prices on Tigers, Poorman, Cœur d'Alene Limited, Eagle of Murderer's Bar, Grubstake. He'd wiped out the old figures to write down Grubstake at the price of a bankrupt mine; the brokers were yelling like demons; the place shook with the uproar; the clock ticked at twenty-nine past; the fool was writing the figures that meant ruin—despair—death!

"Raising my gun I fired right at his fingers, missed, fired again, but the fool was gone. I fired again and again, then once again, and flung my revolver at the blackboard across an empty hall. Yes,

I'd stampeded the brokers, I'd stampeded the whole confounded bunch—the ruck of them was screeching with panic against the doors—and I stood alone in the gallery. The game was won !

"What matter if I did get excited? What matter if I did knock a few deputy marshals out of the gallery? What matter if I did damage a city official—or a dozen—or scores?

"The news is out ; I've won me a wife and a fortune ; I'm boss of the Range ; and Kitty shall live like a queen because I love her—because I've loved her like a man—and she's mine !"

EPILOGUE

DAYBREAK

TOLD BY BILLY

I REGRET to record that the middle part of this narrative, some seventy pages in manuscript, was stolen by the Tenderfoot during the occasional weeks when it was his turn to look after the fire. If that wretched young man had not been able to sleep through cold incredible, showers of boots, and clouds of imprecation, the fire would scarcely have needed kindling ; but regrets are useless. Probably no publisher could have been bribed to print that part of the manuscript ; but one feels an irritation on being reminded of the fact, which the most copious thrashings of the young gentleman in question have altogether failed to allay. This note was necessary to account for

an hiatus otherwise likely to have both puzzled and annoyed the reader.

Since the Stranger's coming the Honourable Larry had taken a "half-interest" in my blanket. How he kicked in his sleep ! When he dreamed, my shins would be blue with bruises ; if he snored, the Captain's missiles never failed to hit me, because of my greater bulk, and after he woke up the youngster always reviled me for taking more than my share of our scanty covering. That morning I dreamed of home until in drowsy abstraction he pulled my hair, swore at me in murmurs, crowded me against the sharp edge of the bunk, and finally began to growl.

"Sleep ! What do you want with sleep ? You've snored like a tug in a fog ever since midnight. Fat lot of rest I get—wish I was tinned beef with a tin all to myself, and a red label 'Pastured on the Prairies—to be well warmed before opening.'"

There could be no advantage in pitching him out of the bunk—for that with the Tenderfoot was hardly ever conducive to peace. So he went on : "The Honourable Larry Wych-Bradwardine, that's

what I am, stuck in a beastly hole under-ground, fed on three cranberries a day, with the joyful expectation of a fish-tail for dinner to-morrow. Of course I growl ! There's that confounded Yankee, heave a boot at him. Why—" The boot struck fair, but as it so happened the Colonel's bunk was empty. "He must have gone out. Last night he won the last of our gold from Jim—Jim's a fool. Fat lot of use being a prospector when a Yankee comes along with a taste for poker. Who says I growled ? I never said he cheated ! What I do say is that the luck's gone the way of our meat—we've swallowed it. Now what I—"

"Gentlemen !" the Stranger stumped ponderously into the shanty, leaving the door wide open.

"Were you born in a barn ?" the Captain shrieked at him. "Shut the door !"

"Captain, I'll go you one better. Shut the door ? Why, don't you feel it—the south wind ? Out of your bunks, boys, for the snow is steaming-wet ! Gentlemen, this makes me feel real good, so I'm going to quit the cripple business right now—here goes for Freedom !"

He broke his crutches with the axe and flung the splintered fragments into the hearth.

"Now," yawned Jim, "what a kindling that would make if we only had a breakfast to cook."

"Don't talk about it," answered the Tenderfoot miserably. "Breakfast"—he tightened his belt—"is a myth."

"Gentlemen," said the Colonel blandly, "have I the ear of the house?"

"He wants our ears now!"

"We're too hungry for the decencies of discussion, or I'd break that youngster's head. Let's come down to facts." He hauled out from under his bunk, bag after bag, a hundredweight of gold. "See here—Jim may be virtuous—he may be beautiful, his heart is immense—but he can't play poker."

The Captain growled.

"Yes, maybe I've gotten more hearts than one sore against me, seeing that I never mined an ounce in Scurvy Gulch. I came here prospecting for mammoth ivory, I've located several cargoes, each worth a gold mine; anyway, I didn't come meandering around the Barren

Grounds for gold, and I've no disposition to cumber my hunting with a sleigh load of specie ; but you gentlemen are partners —share up your earnings now like white men, while I stand referee to see fair play."

" Boys," said the Tenderfoot hoarsely, "the Colonel saved us from scurvy and being turned into cold bones, and all that sort of thing, don't you know. Now I vote he stands in with us as a partner—or be hanged if I'll take a pennyworth of that dust—I—I mean if you don't mind, just to oblige us, Colonel Gig—Gig—Giggleswick."

" And all that sort of thing, don't-cher-know !" said Jim derisively, upon which the Tenderfoot went for him with his belt.

The Stranger took a long time to be persuaded—he was actually blushing !—but in the end the gold was divided into five portions, and we threw dice for the choice of them.

We were still seated in council over the gold, when the clatter of dice and uproar of talk were interrupted by a loud call, a yelping of dogs, a mighty jangle of

bells. In an instant we had kicked away our seats and were jostling around or over the table, but before even the Tenderfoot could cross the cumbered floor a big man darkened the doorway.

"Hurroar boys—are you still alive? Happy New Year to you. How's everything? What! don't you know me, Billy?"

"Eric!"

"That's me—got anything to eat?"

We looked at him in horror, we who had starved on short rations these last two months—another mouth to feed!

"Hustle, Kid," said brave old Jim, "never mind the Captain—you're caterer this week—don't weigh the rations—a good square meal!"

The Captain began growling.

"Boys," said I, "let me introduce my old friend Eric."

"Mr. Eric," quoth the Colonel, with a great warm grip of the hand, "glad to make your acquaintance, sir." The rest of them were holding back from a mere half-breed. "Off with them wet moccasins—we'll see to your dogs."

"Thanks," said Eric simply; "now if

you fellows will help unload the carriole,
I've brought two hundredweight of pem-
mican from Fort Silence."

There was no stiffness now in the half-
breed's reception.

"Here, Mr. Billy," said Eric, when the
others had gone out to unload, "this will
explain—a letter from Mr. d'Anvers."

"My dear Billy," I read, "I have
been a little uneasy as to you outlying
parishioners of mine, so now send north-
ward a supply of provisions by way of
thankoffering for the sunrise. My bi-
annual mail reached me this winter,
which will account for letters herewith,
also a newspaper of May 3rd last.

"By the way, some Indians brought up
a letter from the south which I sent on
last summer per one Giggleswick, appar-
ently insane, who had left a whaler at the
Mackenzie Delta to go hunting for mam-
moth ivory. He may have called on you,
if still living. The letter in question was
for Master Larry of the long name, whose
parents, the Earl and Countess of Brad-
wardine, have been searching the planet
for him these last three years. It seems
that he fell in love with a curate's daugh-

ter, but after what has happened they would rather consent to the engagement than have their son continue in my parish. As I am leaving here soon for my year's furlough, I shall be glad of the lad's companionship on the long trail; so trusting that you will not detain Eric, but send this precious consignment with him by return of post,

"I am, yours sincerely,

"JOHN D'ANVERS."

Never was there a more jovial dinner than that which we discussed during the few hours of adulterated darkness we were pleased to describe as a day. Real tea we had, veritable sugar, and condensed milk; tinned beef, salmon, and plum-pudding; and fine old pemmican, rich with berries and herbs. "Poor Tenderfoot," sighed Jim, "banished from all this! Come, try another summer in Scurvy Gulch!"

"I'm for God's country," the lad's eyes reddened; "I'll punch your head if you talk of Scurvy Gulch." Then with a heart-broken laugh he left the table to pile more logs on the fire. Now that all opposition

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was ended, his love for the curate's daughter seemed strangely chilled. Was it possible that the spell of the North was upon him?

"Why confound you," he argued, "I'm going back to live with white men—besides—demmit—ain't I going to be married?" Then, brushing his wrist across his eyes, "I'll live in God's country with white men; I'll have a wife—and family—and I wish I was dead!"

"My God's country," grumbled the Captain, "is the blasted sea."

"Mine's in the Bitter Root Mountains," —Jim's voice was very low,—"with my old woman—and there'll be three kids now."

The Colonel laughed. "My God's country is the Land of the Almighty Dollar, and don't you forget it."

"Mine's Piccadilly!" squeaked the Kid, now quite recovered, for he was consoling Jim with both fists.

"And yours, Eric?"

"The North"—his deep eyes were looking out as though across the distances of the white tundras—"the great North."

"Mine too," said I, clasping his hand, "for God's Own Country is not so far away."

What an afternoon that was! All hazy in a divine cloud of tobacco, we sat round our one sputtering home-made candle—the Captain doubled up in a corner, with spectacles and the newspaper, reading aloud last May's telegrams, advertisements, editorials, births, deaths, and marriages; Eric sewing up his skin breeches for to-morrow's journey, while he told me in whispers of a little woman waiting for him on the Saskatchewan; the Stranger expansive and full of enthusiasm about mammoth, mastodons, wood-buffalo—or, for all I heard, unicorns and sea-serpents. So the day wore on until, after supper, Eric, with broad smiles of triumph, produced a bottle of Hudson's Bay rum—sent by the humane d'Anvers—which was presently translated into a gorgeous brew of rum punch. The night resounded with song and chorus; we had step-dancing by Jim; then came horse-play, which ended in a general onslaught upon the Tenderfoot for slipping icicles down the Stranger's neck.

Next morning Eric and the Kid prepared for their trip to Fort Silence. Of course the half-breed could not possibly have made the winter journey of five hundred miles with the provisions of one dog-train; but he had wisely left his party of Indians in a base camp at the three-hundredth mile, so that on the return they would be reinforced, and proceed thence in comfort to their journey's end. Fort Silence, the last permanent outpost of mankind, is some two thousand miles from the nearest railroad—indeed, d'Anvers and Larry must travel for many a hard month before parting with Eric on the banks of the Saskatchewan where the civilized world begins.

It was nearly noon when, with the carriage loaded, dogs lying in harness and everything ready for a start, the half-breed asked us to join him for once in prayer. The Captain protested with a growl, but the Stranger gravely spread his red handkerchief in the snow, just as the Arab unfolds a prayer-carpet on his native desert. "See here," he said, "I don't take much stock in religion as you

know, but I guess it's above scoffing at, and the Rev. Mr. d'Anvers wishes this anyways; so, Mr. Eric, I'm with you."

The Tenderfoot giggled, Jim shifted uneasily from foot to foot, the Captain backed into the shanty.

"Boys," said I, "if the Almighty hadn't sent us help this winter we should not be alive now. Let's give thanks for our lives."

"Eric," said Jim, with a queer gulp in his throat, "you're damn well right. Come, Tenderfoot!"

So they both knelt with us in the snow.

Through the tail of one eye I could see into the darkness of the shanty where the Captain was standing with bent head, irresolute; but presently he went down on his knees, his whole frame shaken with strong emotion, and I thought I heard something like a sob.

Then Eric lifted up his hands to the grey of the dawn, pleading with the Master of Life for mercy upon His little children, who all the winter had wrestled with Death in the Barren Grounds, who

still must wander along lonely trails fighting with spiritual Dangers, until the light streaming through the doors of God's Hostel should welcome the traveller to his Rest.

And while he prayed the stars were melted from the terrible brows of Night —of Arctic Night ; the snows of the tundra became like amethyst ; the firmament was suffused with roseate glow, the little clouds were changed to living fire.

A deep silence fell upon all the earth. Far away in the distances of the southern sky, where the azure melted into pale translucent green, there hung a range of clouds like mountains, violet—molten at the base -- incandescent — blazing with ruby light ; and the edge of the world was gold like unto clear glass. Then, as it were upon the pavement of heaven, there arose a little hill of burning splendour to prove to us poor mites that we were not utterly forgotten.

“ Hurrah, boys ! ” cried the Tenderfoot, while the lash roused the team of squealing dogs, and Eric jumped on the carriole

16 THE ARCTIC NIGHT

—“Home, boys, home—for England,
Home, and Beauty! Home, boys,
Home!”

Home? The darkness was settling
down again as we turned back into the
cabin.

THE END

Richard Clay & Sons, Limited, London & Bury.

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